

Voltaire (FMA del.)

THE
HISTORY
OF
CHARLES XII.
OF
SWEDEN.



L O N D O N:

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A

GENERAL HISTORY
OF
SIEGES AND BATTLES.



Of the wars of Charles XII of Sweden.

T HIS illustrious prince, whose wars I am going to relate, "experienced", says a celebrated writer * of his life, "the extremes of prosperity and adversity, without being softened by the one; or in the least disturbed, for a moment at the other. All his actions, even those of his private life, almost exceed the bounds of probability. Perhaps he was the

* Histoire de Charles XII, par monsieur de Voltaire.

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B

only

only man, undoubtedly he was the only king, who ever had lived without weakness. He carried all the virtues of an hero to that excess that they became as dangerous as any of the opposite vices. All the great qualities of his ancestors, were united in him; any one of which had been sufficient to immortalize another prince, proved misfortunes to his country. He never began a quarrel with any, but in his resentment was rather implacable than wise. He was the first who ever had the ambition to be a conqueror, without desiring to augment his dominions. That he might give kingdoms away, was his only motive to the desire of gaining them. The passion he had for glory, for war, and for revenge, made him too little of a politician, without which the world never before saw any prince a conqueror. Before a battle, he was full of confidence, exceeding modest after a victory, and in a defeat undaunted. Sparing others no more than himself, he made a small account of his own, or his subjects lives, or labours; rather an extraordinary than a great man, and fitter to be admired than imitated; in short, he was, perhaps, the most extraordinary man that ever appeared in the world."

Such a character as this, and by so able a writer, cannot but excite our attention to the particulars of his life who was the subject of it; and as none has so well contributed to this purpose, as the same author, I shall make him

him my principal guide in my inquiry into the surprizing life of this unparalleled hero ; except by the present illustrious king of Prussia ; who bids fair, at least to equal, if not to surpass him in part of his character ; but may a happier end be his portion !

Charles XI. of Sweden married † the princess Ulric Eleonora, a lady of great virtue and merit, who not long after their marriage, brought her royal spouse a son, Charles XII. † He was but six years old when he was committed to the care of a very wise and experienced gentleman. He very early showed a strong inclination to the most manly and robust exercises ; and, 'tis said, could manage a horse at seven years of age. He learned the German language, and Latin so as to be able to speak it all his life. He was very fond of Quintus Curtius, and greatly admired the character of Alexander. Though he showed much good nature while in his infancy, yet at the same time he also discovered an insuperable obstinacy. The most powerful motive that wrought upon him was his honour ; if he was told the kings of Poland and Denmark learned, or did, such and such things, he instantly attempted the same, as conducive to his glory. This made him get the better of his aver-

† Year of Christ 1680. † June 27. 1682.

sion to learn Latin, but indeed as to French he never could be induced to use it, throughout his life. At the time that his father died * he was fifteen years old, being then at age according to the laws of Sweden ; but by the will of his father, who was absolute, he was not to be so till he should arrive at the eighteenth year of his age. His father therefore, by his will appointed his mother Edniga Eleonora of Holstein, the dowager of Charles X. guardian to the young monarch, and with a council of five persons, regent of the kingdom.

However, it was not long before king Charles XII. by the assistance of Piper counsellor of state, and count Axel Sparre, got the states general of Sweden to confer the sole government upon him ; on the twenty-fourth of December, in the same year his father died he was crowned king of Sweden §. He from this time made Piper his confident, and soon created him a count, a dignity of great emi-

nence

* April 15. 1697.

§ At his accession to the crown, he found himself in the secure possession not only of Sweden and Finland, but also of Livonia, Carelia, and Ingria ; besides Wismar, Wibourg ; the isles of Rugen, Osel, the most beautiful part of Pomerania, and the dutchy of Bremen and Verden, all which his ancestors had conquered, and secured by

nence in Sweden. He did not discover at the beginning of his reign any of those extraordinary talents, which afterwards rendered him so famous: till the storms, which gathered all at once in the north, roused him to the exercise of them.

King Charles XII. had three powerful neighbours, who, having conceived a very mean opinion of his capacity, from the accounts their ambassadors, who resided at his court, had transmitted to them, determined to take the advantage of his youth, and supposed incapacity, to effect his ruin. Nor were the neighbours of king Charles the only persons who thought meanly of him, for his own subjects did not entertain a much more favourable opinion of their young monarch. These secret enemies of the king were, his cousin Frederick IV. king of Denmark, Augustus II. elector of Saxony, and king of Poland; the third was Peter the Great, Czar † of Moscovy; a more

by long possession, and the solemn treaties of Munster and Oliva, supported by the terror of the Swedish arms. The peace of Ryswick, began under the direction of his father, was concluded under that of the son, who, from the first moment of his reign, found himself the mediator of Europe.

† Czar among the antient Scythians signified king, and has the same meaning with the Tartars and Muscovites.

dangerous enemy than either of the two former.

The king of Denmark entered into a private league with the king of Poland, to attack Livonia, the right to which had been severally disputed by the Muscovites, Poles, and Swedes; but, at this time, possessed by the latter. This measure was entered into by the advice of the famous Patkul, who, for his free remonstrances to the late Charles XI. of Sweden, upon his severe treatment of the Livonians, was condemned as guilty of high treason, but happily made his escape into Poland. As to the Czar, he was desirous to recover those rights which had been ceded by his ancestors to the Swedes; and particularly wanted, for the execution of the great designs he had formed, a port on the east side of the Baltick sea; he therefore concluded a league with the king of Poland, to take away from the Swedes, those countries which he possessed situate between the Gulph of Finland, the Baltick sea, Poland, and Moscovy.

However, these designs were not so closely concealed, but that they came to the knowledge of the king of Sweden's council, when some advised to ward off the impending danger by negotiations; but, whilst they were deliberating, king Charles, rising up, thus delivered himself, with great gravity and resolution: "Gentlemen, I am determined
never

never to undertake an unjust war, nor to close a just one, but with the ruin of my enemies. My resolution is fixed. I will attack the first who shall declare against me; and when I have conquered him, I may then hope to strike a terror into the rest." If his counsellors were astonished at this speech, they were much more so, when they saw him, in an instant, give up all the innocent diversions of youth, and enter upon an entire new course of life; and from which he never after made the shortest deviation. His mind was fired with the thoughts of Alexander and Cæsar; whose examples he resolved to follow, their vices only excepted. Magnificence, sports, and recreations, were now laid aside, and at his table frugality only reigned. Gaiety and dress, which he formerly loved, were now banished for ever, for the plain dress of a soldier, which from henceforth he constantly wore. And that neither love nor wine might impede him, he renounced both for ever after, drinking nothing but water, and never more conversing with women. One motive to this rigorous treatment of himself, with respect to drinking, was, that he might influence his soldiers to forsake that intemperance to which they were too much addicted.

The first thing he did, was to give his brother-in-law, the duke of Holstein, a promise of assistance against the king of Denmark,

mark, who had taken the opportunity of the duke's absence, at Stockholm, to commit hostilities in the country of Holstein. Accordingly, eight thousand men were instantly dispatched to Pomerania, a province near Holstein. By this time the Danes had ravaged the castle of Gotterp, and besieged the town of Tonningen*; but which they could not take. King Charles, in the mean time, set out † on his first campaign from Stockholm, to which he never more returned. He was attended by a great number of his subjects as far as CarelsCroon, who joined tears of admiration with their prayers for his safety and prosperity ‖. The care of the civil government of the kingdom he left to the body of the senate; but that of the fleet, troops, and fortifications of the country, was intrusted to a council of Defence, composed of several senators of his own appointment; and now nothing but war engrossed his attention. His fleet consisted of forty-three sail, the biggest ship of an hundred and twenty guns, called King Charles, on board of which the monarch himself embarked, was the largest the

* A small city in the dutchy of Sleswick, or South Jutland, on the river Eyder.

† Year of Christ, 1700, May 8, N. S.

‖ King Charles was now but eighteen years of age.

Swedes had ever seen. The king was attended by count Piper, his first minister, general Renschild, and the count de Guiscard, embassador from France to the king of Sweden. He joined two squadrons sent to assist the duke of Holstein, the one from England, the other from Holland. The Danish fleet declining an engagement, afforded an opportunity to the three united fleets to approach so near to Copenhagen, as to throw some bombs into the town. Charles, as in a sudden transport, taking count Piper and General Renschild by the hands, "And what," cried he, "if we should seize this opportunity to make a descent by land, and lay siege to Copenhagen by land, whilst it is blocked up by sea!" "Sir," answered Renschild, "the great Gustavus, after fifteen years experience, would not have made any other proposition." There needed no more; five thousand men were ordered instantly to embark, who lay upon the coast of Sweden, and who were joined to the troops on board. The king went from his great ship on board a light frigate, and then three hundred grenadiers were dispatched in small shallops, towards the shore; with these were sent, in small flat-bottomed boats, fascines, chevaux de frize, and the instruments of the pioneers. Next followed the king's men of war, two English, and two Dutch, frigates, to cover the descent with their cannon. The inhabitants,

bitants, apprised of these movements, were greatly surprised at the inactivity of their own fleet, and looked, with terror, to see where the impending storm would fall. The Danes drew up their horse at Humblebeck, within seven miles of Copenhagen, as soon as they observed the fleet of king Charles stopped at that place.

The king quitting his frigate, threw himself into the first shallop, at the head of his guards, "Sir," says the king, in Latin, to the ambassador of France, who was constantly at his side, "you have no difference with the Danes; you shall go no further, if you please." "Sir," answered the count de Guiscard, in French, "the king my master has ordered me to attend your majesty; I flatter myself you will not this day drive me from your court, which never before appeared so splendid." As he spoke these words he gave his hands to the king, who leapt into the shallop, whither count Piper and the ambassador followed him. They advanced under cover of the cannon of the vessels which favoured the descent. The small boats were but about a hundred yards off the shore; Charles, impatient to land, threw himself from the shallop into the sea, with his sword in his hand, and the water above his middle. His ministers, the ambassador of France, the officers, and soldiers, immediately followed his example, and waded to shore, amidst a shower

shower of musket-shot which the Danes discharged. The king, who had never before heard a discharge of muskets loaden with ball, asked major Stuart, who stood next him, what whistling that was which he had in his ears; " 'tis the noise of the musket-balls which they fire upon you," says the major. " That's right," says the king, " henceforward it shall be my musick : " and that moment the major who explained the noise to him, received a shot in his shoulder; and a lieutenant, on the other side of him, fell dead at his feet.

The Danish horse, and foot, after a faint resistance, took to their heels. As soon as the king was master of their entrenchments, he fell upon his knees, to thank God for the first success of his arms. He immediately caused redoubts to be raised towards the town, and himself marked out the encampment. At the same time he sent back his vessels to Schonen ||, for fresh recruits of nine thousand men. Every thing conspired to assist the vivacity of Charles. The nine thousand men were upon the shore ready to embark, and the next morning a favourable wind brought them to him.

The Danish fleet, though they saw all this, did not dare to interpose. Copenhagen, in a

|| A part of Sweden not far from Copenhagen.
B 6
fright.

fright, sent deputies immediately to the king, to entreat him not to bombard the town. He received them on horseback, at the head of his regiment of guards, and the deputies fell upon their knees before him. He demanded of the town four hundred thousand rix-dollars, with orders to supply his camp with all sorts of provisions, which he promised they should be honestly paid for. They brought him the provisions, because they durst not refuse them, but were in no expectation that the conquerors would vouchsafe to pay for them; and those who brought them were astonished to find that they were paid generously, and without delay, by the meanest soldiers in the army ||. His camp, which

|| There had long reigned in the Swedish troops a strict discipline, which contributed not a little to their conquest; and the young king made it still more severe. There was not a soldier who dared to refuse payment for whatever he bought, much less go a marauding, or even stir out of the camp. He would not so much as allow his troops, after a victory, the privilege of stripping the dead, till they had his permission, and easily brought them to the observance of this order. Prayers were constantly said in his camp twice a-day, at seven in the morning, and four in the afternoon; and he never failed to be present at them himself, to give his soldiers an example of piety, as well as valour.

was

was far better regulated than Copenhagen, had every thing in abundance, and the country people chose rather to sell their provisions to their enemies the Swedes, than to their own countrymen, who did not pay so well for them. And the citizens were, more than once, obliged to fetch those provisions from the king of Sweden's camp, which they wanted in their markets.

The king of Denmark was then in Holstein, whither he seemed to have marched only to raise the siege of Tonnigen. He saw the Baltick covered with his enemy's ships, a young conqueror already master of Zealand, and ready to take possession of the capital. He published a declaration that, whoever would take up arms against the Swedes, should have their liberty. This declaration was of great weight, in a country where all the peasants, and even many of the townsmen, were slaves. But Charles XII. was in no fear of an army of slaves. He let the king of Denmark know, that he made war for no other reason but to oblige him to make peace; and that he must either resolve to do justice to the duke of Holstein, or see Copenhagen destroyed, and his kingdom put to fire and sword. The Dane was too fortunate, to have to do with a conqueror, who valued himself upon his justice. A congress was appointed to meet in the town of Travendal, on the frontiers of Holstein. The king

king of Sweden would not suffer the artifices of the ministers to protract the negotiations into any length ; he would have the treaty finished with as much rapidity as he made his descent into Zealand ; and it was effectually concluded on the fifth of August, to the advantage of the Duke of Holstein, who was indemnified from all the expences of the war, and delivered from oppression. The king of Sweden would accept of nothing for himself, being satisfied with having relieved his ally, and humbled his enemy. Thus ended this war, in less than six weeks.

At the very same time the king of Poland laid siege, in person, to the town of Riga, the capital of Livonia ; and the Czar was upon his march on the east, at the head of an hundred thousand men. Riga was defended by the old count d'Alberg, a Swedish general, who, at the age of fourscore, joined all the fire of youth to the experience of sixty campaigns. Count Fleming, since minister of Poland, a great man both in the field and at the council-board, and Mr. Patkul, carried on the siege, under the king's direction ; the one with all the activity proper to his character, and the other with the utmost obstinacy of revenge. But, notwithstanding several advantages which the besiegers had gained, the experience of the old Count d'Alberg rendered all their efforts fruitless, and the king of Poland despaired of gaining the

the town. He at last laid hold of an honourable opportunity of raising the siege: Riga was full of merchants goods, belonging to the Dutch. The States General ordered their ambassador, attending upon king Augustus, to make proper representations of it to him: he consented to raise the siege, rather than occasion the least damage to his allies.

Charles XII. had now no more to do for finishing his first campaign, than to march against his rival in glory †, Peter Alexiowitz, the czar.

The czar published a manifesto, in which he alledged, for a reason of the war, that they had not paid him sufficient honours, when he passed incognito to Riga; and that they sold provisions too dear to his ambassadors. These were the injuries for which he ravaged Ingria with one hundred thousand men!

† He was the more enraged against him, as there were still three Moscovite ambassadors at Stockholm, who had lately sworn to renew an inviolable peace. He, who valued himself upon a severe probity, could not comprehend how a legislator, like the czar, could make a jest of what ought to be held so sacred. The young prince, full of honour, did not so much as dream, that there could be a different morality for princes, and private persons.

He

He appeared before Narva, at the head of this great army, on the first of October; and, at a time when the frosts and snows oblige other nations, in temperate climates, to a suspension of arms, the czar Peter laid siege to Narva, within thirty degrees of the Pole, and Charles XII. was upon his march to relieve it.

The czar was no sooner arrived before the place, than he made haste to put in practice what he had lately learnt abroad on his travels. He marked out his camp, fortified it on all sides, raised redoubts at certain distances, and opened the trench himself. He had given the command of his army to the duke de Croy, a German, and an able general; but at that time very little assisted by the Moscovite officers. The czar had only the rank of a private lieutenant in his own troops. He had a mind to teach his nobility, that places in the army were to be obtained by services; he began himself with beating a drum, and was raised to an officer by degrees*.

On

* The only good foldiers in the army were thirty thousand Streletses, who were in Moscovy what the Janissaries are in Turkey. The rest were barbarians forced from their forests, and covered over with the skins of wild beasts, some armed with arrows, and others with clubs; few of them had

On the 15th of November the czar had information that the king of Sweden, having crossed the sea with two hundred transports, was upon his march to relieve Narva. The Swedes were no more than twenty thousand; but the czar had no advantage, except superiority of numbers. Far, therefore, from despising his enemy, he employed all the art he had to crush him; and not content with an hundred thousand men, he was getting ready another army to oppose him, and check his progress. He had already given orders for near forty thousand recruits, who were coming up from Plescow with great expedition. He went in person to hasten their march, that he might hem in the king between the two armies. Nor was this all, a detachment of thirty thousand men from the camp before Narva, were posted at a league's

had fuses, nor had any one of them seen a regular siege; there was not one good cannoneer in the whole army. An hundred and fifty cannon, which one would have thought must have soon laid the little town of Narva in ashes, were scarce able to make a breach, where the artillery of the town destroyed, every moment, whole ranks in the trenches. Narva was almost without fortifications, and count Hoorn, who commanded there, had not a thousand regular troops; and yet this immense army was not able to reduce it in ten weeks.

distance

distance from the town, directly in the king of Sweden's road : twenty thousand Streletses were placed further off upon the same road, and five thousand others made up an advanced guard ; and he must necessarily force his way through the body of all these troops before he could reach the camp, which was fortified with a rampart and double fosse. The king of Sweden had landed at Pernaw in the gulph of Riga, with about sixteen thousand foot, and a few more than four thousand horse.

From Pernaw he made a flying march as far as Revel, followed by all his horse, and only four thousand of his foot. But he always marched before, without waiting for the rest of his troops ; and soon found himself, with his eight thousand men only, before the first posts of the enemy. He without hesitation attacked them, one after another, without giving them time to learn with how small a number they had to engage. The Moscovites seeing the Swedes come upon them, made no doubt but they had a whole army to encounter, and the advanced guard of five thousand men immediately fled upon their approach. The twenty thousand beyond them, terrified with the flight of their countrymen, made no resistance ; and carried their consternation and confusion among the thirty thousand, who were posted within a league of the camp ; and the panick seizing upon them too, they retired to the

main

main body of the army without striking a blow. These three posts were carried in two days and an half, and did not retard the king's march the space of one hour. He appeared, then, at last, with his eight thousand men, wearied with the fatigues of so long a march, before a camp of an hundred thousand Moscovites, with an hundred and fifty pieces of brass cannon in their front: and he scarce allowed them any time for rest, before he gave his orders for the attack without delay. The signal was two fuses, and the word, in German, "With the aid of God." And thus they marched against the Moscovites, about noon ||.

As soon as the cannon of the Swedes had made a breach in the entrenchments, they advanced, with their bayonets at the end of their fuses; at the same time a violent storm of snow, which fell at their backs, was driven by the wind full in the face of the enemy. The Moscovites stood their fire for half an hour, without quitting their posts. The king attacked the czar's quarter, which lay on the other side of the camp, and was in hopes of a rencounter, as not knowing that the emperor was gone in quest of the forty thousand men, who were daily expected. Upon the first discharge of the enemy's shot

|| Nov. 30, 1700.

the

the king received a ball in his left shoulder, but it grazed only in a slight manner upon the flesh; his activity even hindered him from perceiving that he was wounded. Presently after his horse was killed under him. A second had his head carried off by a cannon ball; and, as he was nimbly mounting a third, "These fellows," says he, "make me exercise," and then he went on to engage and give orders with the same presence of mind as before. Within three hours the entrenchments were carried on all sides. The king pursued the right of the enemy as far as the river of Narva, with his left wing, of only four thousand men, who pursued near fifty thousand. The bridge broke under them as they fled, and the river was in a moment covered with the dead. The rest, in despair, returned to their camp, without knowing whither they went; and finding certain barracks, they took their posts behind them. There they defended themselves for a while, as not knowing how to make their escape: but at last their generals Dolhorouky, Gol-louin, and Federowitz, surrendered themselves to the king, and laid their arms at his majesty's feet. And in the instant they were offering them, came up the duke of Croy, the general of the army, to surrender himself, with thirty officers.

Charles only detained the general officers, all the subalterns and common soldiers were
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disarmed and conducted to the river of Narva, where they were furnished with boats to carry them over, and return them back to their own homes. In the mean time night came on, and the right wing of the Moscovites still continued fighting. The Swedes had not lost fifteen hundred men; eighteen thousand Moscovites had been killed in their intrenchments, a great number was drowned; and many had passed the river. The king employed the small remains of the day in seizing upon the enemy's artillery. He posted himself to advantage between their camp and the town, and there slept some hours on the ground, wrapt up in his cloak, expecting to fall, at day-break, upon the left wing of the enemy, which was not yet entirely routed. But at two o'clock in the morning general Wade, who commanded that wing, having heard of the gracious reception the king had given to the other generals, and how he had sent home all the subaltern officers and soldiers, desired that he would grant him the same favour. The conqueror made answer, that he should have it, if he would draw near, at the head of his troops, and lay down his arms and colours at his feet. The general appeared soon after with his Moscovites, to the number of about thirty thousand. They marched, soldiers and officers, with their heads uncovered, across less than seven thousand Swedes. The soldiers, as they passed
before

before him, threw down their fuses and swords upon the ground, and the officers presented him with their ensigns and colours. He caused the whole multitude to cross the river, without retaining a single soldier prisoner. He then entered victorious into Narva, attended by the duke of Croy and the other general officers of the Moscovites. He ordered their swords to be restored to them, and being informed that they wanted money, and that the tradesmen of Narva refused to trust them, he sent the duke of Croy a thousand ducats, and every Moscovite officer five hundred ; who could never sufficiently admire the civility of their treatment ||.

As

|| There was, among the prisoners taken in this battle, one, too remarkable to be passed over in silence, called Czarafis*, a prince of Georgia. Mitellesky, his father, possessed a kingdom pleasantly situated, between the mountains of Arrarat, and the eastern coasts of the Black Sea ; from which being expelled by his own subjects, he fled for refuge to the czar of Moscovy. The prince, his son, at nineteen years of age, accompanying the great czar, in his expedition against the Swedes, was taken prisoner, as he was fight-

* Which signifies Prince, or son of Czar ; that is, of a King, Czar signifying a King, among the Tartars.

ing,

As the czar was hastily advancing with an army of forty thousand Russians, expecting to enclose his enemy, he received intelligence of the defeat of his numerous army at the battle of Narva; he therefore returned back, determined to discipline his troops, that he might hereafter wipe off the disgrace he had now sustained †. The joyful news of this victory

ing, by some Finland soldiers, who, after they had stripped him, were about to kill him; but was rescued by count Renschild, who presented him to king Charles. The king sent him to Stockholm, where, some few years after, he died. Charles, when the young unhappy prince was taking his leave of him, reflecting on the strange destiny of a young Asiatic prince, born at the foot of mount Caucasus, now going to remain a prisoner among the snows of Sweden, spoke these, as they proved, prophetic words, "It is as if I was to be one day a prisoner among the Crime Tartars." As, indeed, we shall hereafter find he was.

† The Moscovites were so grossly stupid and ignorant, as to ascribe their defeat to the power of magic. And, as St. Nicholas is the patron of Moscow, orders were issued out to offer up to him this extraordinary prayer in all their churches:

"O thou, who art our perpetual comforter, in all our adversities, great St. Nicholas, infinitely powerful, by what sin have we offended thee in our sacrifices, genuflexions, bowings, and thanksgiving--

victory soon reached Stockholm ; where great rejoicings were made, and several medals struck in remembrance of this extraordinary victory ; whilst king Charles returned thanks to God in his camp.

As the king of Poland dreaded the wrath of the conqueror, Charles, he entered into a still stronger league with the czar, at an interview that he had with him at Birsén *.

The king of Poland there engaged to furnish the czar with fifty thousand German troops, to be hired of several princes, and which the czar was to pay for. And he, on the other hand, was to send fifty thousand Moscovites into Poland, to be trained up to war, and promised to pay king Augustus

givings, that thou hast thus forsaken us? We have implored thy assistance against these terrible, insolent, enraged, dreadful, insuperable destroyers, when, like lyons and bears who have lost their young, they have fallen upon us, terrified, wounded, and slain, by thousands, us, who are thy people. As it is impossible this should have happened without diabolical influence, and enchantment, we beseech thee, O great St. Nicholas, to be our champion, and standard-bearer, to deliver us from this troop of forcerers, and drive them far from our coasts, with the recompence that is due unto them." Amen.

* A small town in Luthiania.

three

|| A
English
Vor

three millions of || rixdollars within the space of two years.

Charles XII. used his utmost endeavours to prevent the king of Poland from reaping the benefit of this treaty. After he had passed the winter at Narva he appeared in Livonia. The Saxon troops were posted along the river Duna, which is very broad in that place, and Charles, who lay on the other side of the river, was to dispute the passage. The Saxons were not commanded by their prince, who was then sick, but were headed by mareschal Stenau and prince Ferdinand duke of Courland who commanded under him. The king of Sweden had alone formed the plan of the passage, he was about to attempt. He caused great boats to be made after a new manner, whose sides were far higher than ordinary and could be raised, or let down, like a draw-bridge. When raised they covered the troops they carried; and when let down, they served as a bridge to land them. He made use likewise of another stratagem. Having observed that the wind blew directly from the north; where he lay to the South, where his enemies were encamped, he set fire to a large heap of wet straw, which diffusing a thick smoke over the river hindered the Saxons from seeing his troops, or

|| A rixdollar is worth about half a crown English.

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judging

judging what he was about to do. Under cover of this cloud he sent out barks laden with more of the same smoaking straw, so that the cloud increasing, and being driven by the wind directly in the face of his enemies, it made it impossible for them to know whether he was upon his passage, or not. He alone conducted the execution of his scheme, and being got into the midst of the river, "Well, says he to general Renschild, the Duna will be as good to us as the sea of Copenhagen; take my word for it, general, we shall beat them." He got to the other side in a quarter of an hour and was vext to find that three people had leapt a shore before him. He immediately landed his cannon, and drew up his troops before the enemy, who were quite blinded with smoak, and could not make any opposition but by a few random-shot. And the wind having dispersed the mist, the Saxons saw the king of Sweden already upon his march against them.

Mareschal Stenau lost not a moment, but at the first appearance of the Swedes fell furiously upon them with the flower of his horse. The violent shock of that troop falling upon the Swedes in the instant they were forming their battalions, threw them into disorder. They gave way, were broken, and pursued even into the river. The king of Sweden rallied them in a moment in the midst of the water, with as much ease, as if he had been making

making a review. The soldiers then, marching more compact than before, beat back Marschal Stenau and advanced into the plain. Stenau finding his troops in a consternation, made them retire very dexterously into a dry place, flanked with a morass, and a wood where his artillery lay. The advantage of the ground, and the time he had given the Saxons to recover from their first surprise, restored them to their courage. Charles immediately fell upon them, with fifteen thousand men, and Stenau and the duke of Courland with about twelve thousand. The battle was sharp and bloody; the duke had two horses killed under him, and thrice penetrated into the midst of the king's guard; but being at last beat off his horse with a blow from a musquet, his army fell into confusion, and disputed the victory no longer. His cuirassiers carried him off with difficulty, greatly bruised and half dead, from the thickest of the fight, and from under the horses' heels, which trampled on him.

The king of Sweden after this victory, marched immediately to Mittau, † and took it. All the towns of the dutchy surrendered to him at discretion. He passed without delay into Lithuania, and conquered wherever he came. He as himself owned, felt a pleasing satisfac-

† The capital of Courland.

tion when he entered the town of Birsén in triumph, where Augustus king of Poland and, the Czar had plotted his destruction but a few months before. He here laid the design of dethroning the king of Poland by the hands of the Poles themselves. And from this time the affairs of Augustus grew worse and worse and he was at last obliged to call a diete, which accordingly met at Warsaw †. But Augustus soon perceived that king Charles XII. had at least as much power as himself in that assembly. The victories of Charles XII. protector of prince Sobiesky, the civil war of Lithuania, and the general disaffection of the poles, were greatly injurious to Augustus. Charles XII. still continued with his victorious army in the dutchy of Lithuania, declaring that he would not disturb the diete; that he declared war against Augustus and the Saxons, and not against Poland, and that far from designing any thing against the republic, he came to rescue it from oppression. Charles leaving garrisons behind him in some towns of Lithuania, advanced beyond Grodno; a place famous for the dietes held there. At some miles from Grodno he was met by an embassy from the republic. But when he came to give his answer to the republick which sent them, and which did not enter into his measures with a submission so ready as he expected,

† December 2 1701.

he told them by count Piper, that he would give an answer at Warsaw.

The same day he marched towards that town. This march was preceded by a manifesto, by which Charles invited all the Poles to join their revenge with his, and pretended to show that their interest and his were the same. The senators, who opposed Augustus, published this writing aloud even before his face, and the few who adhered to him, kept silence. At last, when they heard that Charles was advancing by long marches, they all prepared in confusion to depart; some fled to their own country seats waiting to see how things would terminate, and others to arm their friends. There remained with the king only the embassadors of the emperor and the Czar, the pope's Nuncio, and some few bishops and palatines, who were attached to his fortune. He was forced to fly, being too weak to oppose the enemy, and little satisfied with the conduct of his own party. He strait published his orders for assembling the Pospolite, § and armies which were scarce any thing but a bare name. There was nothing to be hoped for out of Lithuania, where the Swedes were posted. And the army of Poland, reduced to a small number of troops, wanted arms,

§ The nobility of Poland when they take up arms are so called.

provisions, and good will. The greatest part of the nobility were intimidated, irresolute, or ill-disposed, and confined themselves to their own estates. His chief dependence was upon the troops of his electorate, where the form of government, being entirely absolute, left him under no apprehensions of being disobeyed. He had already given private orders for twelve thousand Saxons, who were upon their march with all possible speed. He also recalled the eight thousand he had promised to the emperor to assist him in his wars against France, and which in the necessity he was reduced to, he was obliged to withdraw. Whilst these soldiers were marching up in troops, and whilst he was flying from palatinate to palatinate to assemble the nobility who adhered to him, the king of Sweden at last arrived before Warsaw, on the fifth of May 1702. The gates were opened to him upon the first summons. He sent away the Polish garrison, dismissed the city guard, every where posted guards of his own, ordered the inhabitants, to bring in their arms, and content with having disarmed them, and not willing to exasperate them, he demanded no more of them than a contribution of an hundred thousand francs,

The king of Poland saw plainly, that he must either lose his crown, or preserve it by arms; and he used his utmost efforts to succeed

ceed in that great decision. All his Saxon troops were arrived from the frontiers of Saxony. The nobility of the palatinate of Cracow, where he now remained, came in a body to offer him their services. Fortified with these succours, and the troops which were called the army of the crown, he went for the first time to seek in person the king of Sweden; and he was not long before he found him, for he was already marching against him towards Cracow.

The two kings met on the nineteenth of July 1702, in a very spacious plain near Clisfau between Warsaw and Cracow. Augustus had near four and twenty thousand men, and Charles XII. not above twelve thousand. The battle began with the playing of the artillery. Upon the first volley, which was discharged by the Saxons, the duke of Holstein who commanded the Swedish horse, a young prince of great courage and virtue, received a cannon ball in the reins. The king inquired if he was dead, and was told that he was; he made no answer, but the tears fell from his eyes, and then covering his face for a moment with his hands, on a sudden he spurred his horse with fury, and rushed into the thickest of the enemy, at the head of his guards.

The king of Poland did all that could be expected from a prince who fought for his

crown. He thrice led up his troops in person to the charge ; but the ascendant of Charles XII. carried it, and gained a complete victory. The enemy's camp, colours and artillery, and Augustus's military chest, were left to him. He made no stay upon the field of battle, but marched strait to Cracow, pursuing the king of Poland, who fled before him.

The citizens of Cracow were bold enough to shut their gates upon the conqueror. He caused them to be burst open, and took the castle by assault. His soldiers, the only men in the world who could abstain from pillage after a victory, did not offer the least ill-treatment to any one citizen ; but the king made them pay sufficiently for the temerity of their resistance, by charging them with excessive contributions,

He departed from Cracow in the full resolution of pursuing Augustus without intermission. But within some miles from the city his horse fell under him, and broke his thigh. They were obliged to carry him back to Cracow, where he was confined to his bed for six weeks in the hands of his surgeons. This accident gave Augustus leisure to breathe a little. He caused it immediately to be spread throughout Poland and Germany, that Charles XII. was killed by his fall. This false report, which was credited for some time, filled all mens minds with astonishment and uncertainty

ty. In this small interval he assembles all the orders of the kingdom at Mariembourg, and then at Lublin, who had before been called together to Sendomir. The assembly was very large, as few of the palatinates refused to send their deputies thither. He regained almost all their inclinations by presents and promises, and by his affability. The diet were soon undeceived concerning the false report of the king of Sweden's death: but that great body was already put in motion, and they suffered themselves to be carried along by the impulse they had received, and all its members swore to continue faithful to their king.

The determination of this diete was, that the republick of Poland should maintain an army of fifty thousand men at their own expence for the service of their prince; that they should allow the Swedes six weeks time to declare whether they intended peace or war, and the same term to the princes of Sapiaha, the first authors of the troubles in Lithuania, to come in and beg pardon of the king of Poland.

In the mean time Charles XII. recovered of his wound, and overturned all before him. Always fixt in his resolution of forcing the Poles themselves to dethrone their king, by the intrigues of the cardinal Primate, he caused a new assembly to be called together at Warsaw to oppose that of Lublin. His generals

als represented to him that the affair might thus be protracted to a tedious length, and at last vanish in delays; that during this time the Moscovites, were daily skirmishing with the troops he had left behind in Livonia and Ingria; that the event was not always favourable to the Swedes, and that his presence there, in all probability, would very soon become necessary. Charles, who was as steady in the execution of his projects, as he was brisk in his actions, answered, "Though I were to stay here fifty years, I would not leave the place 'till I had dethroned the king of Poland."

He left the assembly of Warsaw to dispute by discourses and writings with that of Lublin. Having augmented his victorious troops with six thousand horse and eight thousand foot, which he received from Sweden, he marched against the remains of the Saxon army he had beaten at Clissa, which had gained time to rally and recruit whilst his fall from his horse had confined him to his bed.

This army shunned his approach, and retired towards Prussia on the north-west of Warsaw. The river Bug lay between him and his enemies. Charles swam over it at the head of his horse, whilst the foot went to seek a ford somewhat higher. He came up * with

* May 1 1703.

the Saxons at a place called Pultusk. They were commanded by general Stenau to the number of about ten thousand. The king of Sweden in his precipitate march had brought no more along with him, being confident that a less number would have sufficed. The terror of his arms was so great, that one half of the Saxon army ran away at his approach, without staying for the battle. General Stenau stood firm for a while with two regiments, but the moment after he was drawn along in the general flight of his army, which was dispersed before it was conquered. The Swedes did not take a thousand prisoners, nor kill six hundred men, having more difficulty in pursuing than defeating them.

Augustus, who had nothing left him, but the scattered remains of the Saxons beaten on all sides, retired in haste to Thorn, † Charles immediately prepared to besiege it. The king of Poland not thinking himself secure withdrew into Saxony. In the mean time Charles, not being able to bring up his cannon before Thorn; was obliged to wait 'till it was sent him from Sweden by sea. *

Every

† An ancient city of royal Prussia, situate upon the Weiffel, and under the protection of Poland.

* Whilst he was waiting for it, he took up his quarters within some miles of the city, and would often advance too near the ramparts, to view it.

Every thing succeeded with him, and his negotiations and arms were equally fortunate. He was in a manner present throughout all

The plain dress he always wore was of greater service to him than he had ever imagined in these dangerous walks. It hindered him from being taken notice of, and pointed out by the enemy, as a person to be fired at. One day having approached very near with one of his generals named Lieven, who was dressed in scarlet trimmed with gold, and fearing lest his general should be perceived, he strait ordered him to walk behind him moved by that magnanimity so natural to him, which even hindered him from reflecting that he exposed his own life to a manifest danger to save that of his subject. Lieven discerning his error too late in having put on a remarkable habit, which exposed also those who were with him, and fearing equally for the king in whatever place he was, hesitated a while whether he ought to obey him ; while this contest lasted, the king takes him by the arm, put himself before him, and hides him ; at the same instant a cannon ball, which came in flank, struck the general dead upon that very spot, which the king had scarce quitted. The death of this man, killed directly in his stead and because he had a mind to save him, contributed not a little to confirm him in the notion he ever held of absolute predestination, and made him believe, that his fate which protected him in so singular a manner, reserved him for the execution of greater things.

Poland

Poland ; for his grand mareschal Renchild was in the heart of those dominions with a great body of the army. Near thirty thousand Swedes under different generals, dispersed towards the north and the east upon the frontiers of Moscovy, withstood the efforts of the whole empire of Russia, and Charles was in the west at the other end of Poland, at the head of the best part of his troops.

From the German ocean almost to the mouth of the Boristhenes, which makes the breadth of Europe, and to the gates of Moscow, all was in consternation, and every moment expecting an entire revolution. His vessels were masters of the Baltick, and employed in transporting prisoners from Poland into his own country. Sweden alone was calm in the midst of these great emotions, tasting the sweets of a profound peace, and enjoying the glory of her king without bearing the weight of it ; since his victorious troops were paid and maintained at the expence of the conquered.

In this general silence of the north before the arms of Charles XII. the city of Dantzick ventured to disoblige him. Fourteen frigates and forty transport vessels were bringing the king a supply of six thousand men, with cannon and ammunition to finish the siege of Thorn. These succours must necessarily pass up the Weisseil. At the mouth of this river lies Dantzick. Count Steinbock,

one

one of the Swedish generals, assembled the magistrates in the king's name, demanding a passage for the troops and some ammunition. The magistrates durst neither absolutely refuse nor expressly grant what he had demanded. But general Steinbock made them give by force more than he had asked ; and further exacted from the town a contribution of a hundred thousand crowns by way of recompence for their impudent denial. At last the recruits, the cannon and ammunition being arrived before Thorn, the siege was begun †.

Rovel, governor of the place, defended it a month with a garrison of five thousand men. And then it was forced to surrender at discretion. The garrison were made prisoners of war, and sent into Sweden. Rovel was presented to the king unarmed, who made him a considerable present in money, and sent him away upon his parole. This poor petty town was condemned to pay forty thousand crowns.

Elbing, a town built upon an arm of the Weisseil did not take a proper advantage of the Dantzickers inadvertency, but hesitated too long about giving passage to the Swedish troops ; and was more severely punished than Dantzick itself. Charles entered there in person on the thirteenth of December at the head of four thousand men armed with bayo-

† Sept. 22.

nets at the end of their musquets. The inhabitants in a consternation fell upon their knees in the streets and begged for mercy. He took from them all their arms, lodged his soldiers in their houses, and then, having called the magistrates together, obliged them to raise that very day a contribution of two hundred and sixty thousand crowns. There were in the town two hundred pieces of cannon, and four hundred thousand weight of gun-powder, which he siezed.

The cardinal Radjousky || had scarce taken an oath to king Augustus, that he would attempt nothing against him, before he went to the assembly at Warsaw, but still under the pretence of peace. He was attended by three thousand soldiers raised upon his own estate, but upon his coming there talked of nothing but concord and obedience. At last he threw off the mask, and on the fourteenth of February 1704, declared in the name of the assembly, Augustus elector of Saxony incapable of wearing the crown of Poland. They then pronounced with a common voice, that the throne was vacant. The session of that day was not yet ended, when a courier from the king of

* He was archbishop of Gresna primate of Poland and president of the diete. He was a man full of artifice, a secret friend to Sobiesky, the predecessor of Augustus and long a private enemy to the latter.

Sweden, brought a letter from his majesty to the assembly. The cardinal opened the letter, which contained an order in form of a request to elect prince James Sobiesky for their king. They were disposed to obey with joy, and even fixed the day of the election. The prince was then at Breslau in Silesia, waiting with impatience for the crown, which his father had wore. He was complimented upon it, and some flatterers had even already given him the title of majesty, in speaking to him. As he was one day hunting at some leagues from Breslau with prince Constantine one of his brothers, thirty Saxon horsemen, sent privately by king Augustus, broke out of a sudden upon them from a neighbouring wood, surround the two princes, and carry them off without resistance. Fresh horses stood ready at a distance, upon which they were immediately carried to Lipsick, and close-confined. This step at once broke all the measures of Charles, the Cardinal, and the assembly at Warsaw.

King Augustus was almost at the same time upon the point of being taken himself. He was at dinner within three leagues of Cracow, relying upon an advanced guard posted at some distance, when general Renschild came suddenly upon him, after having carried off the guard. The king of Poland had but just time to get on horse-back with ten others. General Renschild pursued him four days, ready to
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seize upon him every moment. The king fled to Sendomir, and the Swedish general followed him thither; and it was a singular piece of good fortune, that he made his escape.

In the mean time the king's party treated that of the cardinal, and were reciprocally treated by them, as traitors to their country. The army of the crown was divided between the two factions. Augustus forced at last to accept of succours from the Moscovites, repented that he had not applied to them sooner. Sometimes he marched into Saxony, where his forces were exhausted; and sometimes he would return into Poland, where they durst not assist him. On the other side the king of Sweden reigned in Poland calm and victorious, and more absolutely than Augustus had ever done.

Count Piper, who was as much of a politician as his master was of a hero, laid hold of the opportunity to advise Charles XII. to take upon himself the crown of Poland. Charles gave way to the temptation for a moment, but glory was his idol. He sacrificed his interest to it, and the pleasure he would have had in taking Poland from the pope. He told count Piper, that he chose rather to give away kingdoms than gain them, and added smiling, "You were made for the minister of an Italian prince."

Charles

Charles lay still near Thorn, in that part of royal Prussia which belongs to Poland; he thence observed all that was transacted at Warsaw, and kept the neighbouring powers in awe.

Charles XII. soon after gave an audience to the young palatine Stanilaus Lecinski sent to him by the assembly at Warsaw, to inform him of the differences which had arose among them since prince James was carried away. The king conceived a very high opinion of him, which being encreased by the character † he received of him, he determined he should be king of Poland. He therefore dispatched count Hoorn to signify to the assembly at Warsaw, that they must elect a king in five days, and that they must choose Stanilaus Lecinski. The count arrived there the seventh of July, and fixed the twelfth for the day of election. That day the session having lasted from three in the afternoon till nine in the evening, the bishop of Posenania, who presided for the cardinal

† He was a prince of great courage, inured to fatigue, lay constantly upon a kind of straw matress, required no service of his domestics about his person, temperate, to a degree little known to that climate, liberal and adored by his vassals. He had at this time a wife and two daughter, of which the youngest was then but a year old, and has since been queen of France.

primate

primate, he choosing to be absent, put an end to the diete, by declaring in the name of it, Stanislaus elected king of Poland.

Charles XII. immediately quitted Warsaw, to finish the conquest of Poland. He had fixed the general rendezvous of his army before Leopold †. It was thought it would hold out fifteen days, by means of the fortifications which king Augustus had made there. The conqueror sat down before it on September fifth, and the next day carried it by assault; and all who resisted were put to the sword. The victorious troops, who were now masters of the town, did not disband to run after pillage, notwithstanding the report of the treasures which were in Leopold; but ranged themselves in order of battle in the great square. There the remains of the garrison came to surrender themselves prisoners of war. The king then proclaimed his orders by sound of trumpet, that all the inhabitants who had any effects belonging to king Augustus or his adherents, should bring them in person before night came on, under pain of death. The measures were so well taken, that few ventured to disobey him, and they brought his majesty four hundred chests filled with gold and silver coin, plate and other valuable effects.

† The capital of the great palatinate of Russia, a place considerable in itself, but more so for the riches it contained.

The beginning of Stanislaus's reign was almost the same day made remarkable by a very different event. Some affairs which absolutely required his presence had obliged him to continue at Warsaw. The cardinal primate, the bishop of Posnania, and some great men of Poland made up his court. His guards consisted of six thousand Polanders of the army of the crown, who were lately brought over into his service ; and whose fidelity he had not yet made trial of. General Hoorn governor of the town, had not with him besides above fifteen hundred Swedes. They were at Warsaw in perfect tranquility, and Stanislaus reckoned to depart thence in a few days to go to the conquest of Leopold : When all of a sudden he received information that a numerous army was drawing near to the town. King Augustus, who by a fresh effort, and one of the finest marches that ever general made, having eluded the king of Sweden, was coming up with twenty thousand men to fall upon Warsaw, and carry off his rival.

Warsaw was very ill fortified, and the Polish troops who defended it, were not to be relied on. Augustus had intelligence within the town that if Stanislaus tarried, he was sure to be undone. He sent his family therefore into Posnania under the guard of those Polish troops, in whom he could put most confidence. The cardinal primate fled one of the first to the frontiers of Prussia. Several gentlemen

gentlemen took different roads. The new king went directly to Charles XII. learning early to suffer disgrace, and forced to quit his capital within six weeks after he had been there advanced to the sovereignty. One part of the six thousand Polanders followed Stanislaus, and another conducted his family. They sent those into Posenania, whose fidelity they would not expose to the temptation of returning into the service of the king of Sweden, he took up his residence in the castle with his fifteen hundred Swedes.

Augustus entered the capital as a sovereign incensed and victorious. Every inhabitant was taxed beyond his abilities, and ill treated by the soldiers. The cardinal's palace and all the houses of the confederate lords, with all their possessions both in town and country, were given up to plunder. Count Hoorn stood the constant fire of the enemy in the castle wherein he was enclosed; but the place at last being no longer able to hold out, he was forced to beat a parley, and remained prisoner of war, with his fifteen hundred Swedes.

Count Hoorn, released upon his parole, came to Leopold, within a small time after Stanislaus. He took the liberty of complaining a little to the king of Sweden, that his majesty had not relieved Warsaw. "Be not under much concern about it, my poor count, (says the king) we must let king Augustus do something by way

way of amusement, or otherwise he would grow tired of having us so long in his neighbourhood; but take my word for it, he shall not be the better for this advantage.

In reality this last effort of Augustus was but the blaze of a fire that was going out. His troops, which were hastily got together, were either Poles ready to abandon him upon the first disgrace, or Saxon recruits who had never yet seen any service, or vagabond Cosaques fitter to plunder the conquered, than to conquer. All trembled at the name of the king of Sweden.

Charles, accompanied by king Stanislaus, went in quest of his enemy at the head of the best part of his troops. The Saxon army fled constantly before him. The towns for thirty miles round sent him their keys, and no day passed which was not signalized with some advantage. Successes began to grow too familiar to Charles. He said it was rather hunting than fighting, and complained of not gaining a victory on more difficult terms.

Augustus committed the care of his army for some time to count Shullembourg, a very able general. He was under more concern to preserve his master's troops than to conquer; he acted by stratagem, and the two kings with vigour. He marched off unknown to them, seized upon advantageous passages, and sacrificed some horse, to give time to his foot to retire with safety.

After several artifices and countermarches he found himself near Punitz in the palatinate of Posnania, imagining that the king of Sweden and king Stanislaus were above fifty leagues off from him. But coming thither, he learnt that the two kings had marched those fifty leagues in nine days, and were ready to fall upon him with ten or twelve thousand horse. Shullembourg had not a thousand horse, nor above eight thousand foot, and was to keep his ground against a superior army, the name of the king of the king of Sweden, and the natural fears which so many defeats had raised in the Saxons.

He posted himself so advantageously, that he could not be surrounded; his first rank bent one knee upon the ground, and was armed with pikes and fuses; the soldiers stood extremely close, and presented to the enemies horse a kind of rampart pointed with pikes and bayonets; the second rank bending a little upon the shoulders of the first, fired over their heads, and the third standing upright, fired at the same time behind the other two. The Swedes fell upon the Saxons with their usual impetuosity, who waited for them unshaken; the discharge of the musquets, the pikes and bayonets startled the horses, and set them a capering instead of advancing. By this means the Swedes made their attack in disorder, and the Saxons defended themselves by keeping their ranks.

If

If Charles had ordered his horsemen to alight, the army of Shullembourg must have been inevitably destroyed. There was nothing the geneeal was so much afraid of, and he every moment expected that the enemy would have taken that resolution. But neither the king of Sweden, who had so often practised all the stratagems of war, nor any of his generals, ever thought of it. This unequal fight of a body of horse against the foot, though often interrupted and renewed, lasted three hours. The Swedes lost more horses than men. Shullembourg at last gave way, but his troops were not broken. He drew them up into an oblong battalion, and, though he had received five wounds in the engagement, he retired in good order, in this form about midnight to the small town of town of Gurau, within three leagues of the field of battle. And he scarce began to breathe in that place, before the two kings appeared suddenly at his heels.

Beyond Gurau, towards the river Oder, lay a thick wood, through which the Saxon general saved his fatigued army. The Swedes without pausing pursued him through the thickets, making their way with difficulty through places which were scarce passable by people on foot; and the Saxons had not crossed the wood above five hours before the Swedish horse. On the other side the wood runs the river, Parts, at the foot of a village named Rutsen. Shullembourg had sent before in all

haste

haste to get the boats together, and carried his troops across the river, which were already half lost. Charles was come to one side of the river by that time Shullembourg had got to the other. No general ever retreated with so much art, nor did ever conqueror so briskly pursue his enemy. The reputation of Shullembourg depended upon his escaping from the king of Sweden, and the king thought his glory concerned in taking Shullembourg and the rest of his army. He lost no time, but swam his horse cross the river. And thus the Saxons were enclosed between the river Parts, and the great river of Oder, which has its source in Silesia, and is in this place very deep and rapid.

The loss of Shullembourg appeared inevitable; he still strove all he could to extricate himself from this extremity. He had not above four thousand men left; a mill, which he filled with grenadiers, lay on his right hand, and a morass on his left; he had a Fosse before him, and his rear-guard was upon the banks of the Oder. He had no bridges of boats to throw over the river, but in the evening gave orders for planks. Charles upon his arrival immediately attacks the mill in full persuasion that, after he had taken it, the Saxons must either perish in the river, or die sword in hand, or at least surrender themselves prisoners at discretion with their general. In the meanwhile the planks were got ready, and the

Saxons passed the Oder over them in the night : and when Charles had forced the mill, he found no more of the enemies army †.

But king Augustus, once more abandoned Poland to his enemies, withdrew into Saxony, and repaired the fortifications of Dresden with precipitation, already with reason trembling for the capital of his hereditary dominions.

Thus was Poland subdued by Charles XII. His generals after his example had beaten several small bodies of Moscovites in Courland, who ever since the great battle of Narva had not shewn themselves but in small companies, and made war in those quarters like the vagabond Tartars, who plunder and run away, and appear again but to repeat their flight.

Wherever the Swedes were, they thought themselves secure of victory, though they were but twenty against a hundred. Under these happy conjunctures Stanislaus prepared for his coronation *.

Whilst

† The two king's honoured this retreat with their commendations, and it is spoken of to this day in the empire with admiration. And Charles could not help saying, " Shullembourg has conquered us to day."

* The coronation was solemnized quietly and magnificently on October 4, 1705, in the town

Whilst Charles XII. was thus giving a king to the conquered Poles, and Denmark did not presume to trouble him; whilst the king of Prussia courted his friendship, and Augustus was retired to his hereditary dominions; the czar grew every day more formidable. He had feebly assisted Augustus in Poland, but had made powerful diversions in Ingria.

He not only began to be a great soldier himself, but also to teach his Moscovites the art of war: discipline was established in his troops; he had good engineers, a serviceable artillery, and a great many good officers; and had learnt the great art of subsisting his armies. Some of his generals both knew how to fight, and, if occasion required, to decline it; and besides, he had got together a fleet which was able to make head against the Swedes in the Baltick Sea.

Grown strong by all these advantages which were owing to his genius only, and

of Warsaw, notwithstanding the usual custom in Poland of crowning their kings at Cracow. Stanislaus Lecfinsky and his wife Charlotte Opalinska were crowned king and Queen of Poland by the hands of the archbishop of Leopold, assisted by several other prelates. Charles XII. was present at the ceremony incognito, as he had been at the election; the only fruit he reaped from his conquests.

the absence of the king of Sweden, he took Narva by assault †, after a regular siege, having prevented its being relieved either by sea or land. As soon as the soldiers were masters of the town they fell to plunder, and gave themselves up to the most enormous barbarities. The czar ran from place to place to put a stop to the disorder and massacre. He himself snatched the women out of the hands of the soldiers, who were going to cut their throats, after having ravished them. He was even obliged to kill with his own hands several Moscovites, who did not hearken to his orders *.

The czar, held out still an helping hand to king Augustus, he persuaded him by general Patkul, who had lately passed into the service of Moscovy, and was then the czar's ambassador in Saxony, to come to Grodno to confer with him once more upon the unhappy state of his affairs. King Augustus came thither with some troops, attended by

† Aug. 22, 1704.

* They yet shew the table in the town-house at Narva, upon which he laid his sword, as he entered, and tell the words which he spoke to the citizens, who flocked thither after him : “ It is
“ not, says he, with the blood of the inhabitants,
“ that my sword is stained, but with that of the
“ Moscovites, whom I have shed to save your
“ lives.”

general Shullembourg, whose passage over the Oder had rendered him famous in the north, and in whom he placed his last hopes. The czar arrived, with an hundred thousand men marching after him. The two monarchs formed new schemes of war.

It was resolved that the czar's army should be divided into several bodies to oppose every motion of the king of Sweden. The conference of the two kings ended in an extraordinary manner. The czar departed suddenly, and left his troops to his ally, to go and extinguish a rebellion in person, which threatened him in Astracon.

In the mean while the hundred thousand Moscovites on one side, divided into several small bodies, burnt and ravaged the estates of the adherents to Stanislaus; and Shullembourg on the other was advancing with his fresh troops. But the fortune of the Swedes dispersed these two armies in less than two months. Charles XII. and Stanislaus fell upon the separate bodies of the Moscovites one after another; but so briskly, that one Moscovite general was beaten before he knew of the defeat of his companion *.

The

* No obstacle could put a stop to the progress of the conqueror. If he found a river in his way betwixt him and the enemy. Charles and his

The Muscovites, terrified and reduced to a small number, fled in disorder beyond the Boristhenes.

Whilst Charles was thus driving the Moscovites before him into the heart of Lithuania, Shullembourg at last repassed the Oder, and came at the head of twenty thousand men to give battle to the grand mareschall Renschild. These two famous general, who seemed to share in the fate of their masters, met near Punitz in a place called Fravenstad, a territory already fatal to the troops of Augustus. Renschild had no more than thirteen battalions and two and twenty squadrons, which all together made about ten thousand men; and Shullembourg had twice as many. It is to be observed, that he had in his army between six and seven thousand Moscovites, which had long been disciplined in Saxony, and were looked upon as experienced soldiers, who joined the German discipline to the Russian

Swedes would swim their horses over it. One party of Swedes took the baggage of Augustus, in which were two hundred thousand crowns of silver coin; Satnillaus made a seizure of eight hundred thousand ducats belonging to prince Menzikof the general of the Moscovites. Charles at the head of his horse would often march thirty leagues in four and twenty hours, every soldier leading another horse in his hand to mount, when his own was weary.

fierceness

fierceness. But this very general Shullembourg, who with four thousand men had in a manner eluded the fortune of the king of Sweden, sunk under that of general Renschild. The engagement lasted not a quarter of an hour, the Saxons did not resist a moment, and the Moscovites threw down their arms upon the first appearance of the Swedes; the terror was so sudden, and the disorder so great, that the conquerors found upon the field of battle seven thousand fuses all charged, which they had thrown away without firing. No defeat was ever quicker, more complete and more shameful; and yet no general had ever made a finer disposition than Shullembourg that day by the confession of all the Saxon and Swedish officers, who learnt by the consequence how little human prudence is mistress of events*.

Among the prisoners there was found an entire regiment of Frenchmen; who desired that they might be allowed to serve Charles XII. and were received into his service.

As to the Moscovites, they begged for life upon their knees; but Renschild ordered them to be inhumanly massacred in cold blood above six hours after the battle, to revenge on them the depredations of their country-

* This battle of Fravenstad was fought February 12, 1706.

men, and disencumber himself of a number of prisoners he knew not what to do with.

Augustus now had nothing left himself but Cracow, where he was shut up with two regiments of Moscovites, two of Saxons, and some troops of the army of the crown, by whom he was even afraid he should be delivered up to the conqueror; but his misfortunes were completed, when they heard that Charles XII. had at last entered Saxony on September 1, 1706.

The diete of Ratisbonne, which represents the empire, and whose resolutions are often as ineffectual as they are solemn, declared the king of Sweden an enemy to the empire, in case he passed beyond the Oder with his army; which very determination confirmed him in his resolution of marching into Germany.

Upon his approach the villages were deserted, and the inhabitants fled on all sides. Charles did here, as before at Copenhagen. He caused his proclamation to be fixed up in all places, that he had no other design but to procure peace; that all those who returned to their houses, and paid the contributions he should require, should be treated as his own subjects, and the rest pursued without quarter. This declaration from a prince, who was never known to have broken his word, brought back the inhabitants in numbers, whom fear had driven away. He encamped at Altranst d, near the plain of Lutzen.

From

From this camp, he gave orders to the estates of Saxony to meet, and send him without delay the registers of the finances of the electorate. As soon as he had them in his power, and was informed exactly of what Saxony could supply, he imposed, a tax upon it of six hundred twenty five thousand rixdollars a month. Besides which contribution, the Saxons were obliged to furnish every Swedish soldier with two pound of meat, two pound of bread, two pots of beer, and four pence a day, with forage for the horse. The contributions being thus regulated, the king established a new method of guarding the Saxons from the insults of his soldiers. He ordered in all the towns where he put garrisons, that every inn-keeper, in whose house the soldiers were quartered, should give certificates of their behaviour every month, without which the soldier, was not to have his pay. Inspectors besides went every fifteen days from house to house, to make inquiry whether the Swedes had occasioned any disturbances; and care was taken to make the inn-keepers amends, and punish the persons in fault †.

King

† One day, as the king was riding out near Lipsick, a Saxon peasant threw himself at his feet to ask justice of him against a grenadier, who

King Augustus wandering in Poland, and deprived at once both of his kingdom and electorate, at last wrote a letter with his own hand to Charles XII. to ask a peace. This letter he secretly sent by baron Imhoff and mons. Finsten, referendary of the privy council; he gave them full powers and a blank signed; Go, says he, "endeavour to obtain "for me reasonable and christian conditions." He was reduced to the necessity of concealing this overture for peace, and not to have recourse to the mediation of any prince; for, being then in Poland at the mercy of the Moscovites he had reason to fear that the dangerous ally, whom he abandoned, would revenge upon him his submission to the conqueror. His two plenipotentiaries came by

had just taken from him what he designed for his family's dinner. The king ordered the soldier to be brought before him, "And is it true, says he, "with a stern countenance, that you have robbed "this man? Sir, says the soldier, "I have not "done him so much mischief, as your majesty "has done his master; you have taken a kingdom from him, and I have only taken a turkey "from this fellow." The king gave the poor man ten ducats with his own hand, and pardoned the soldier for the boldness of his reply, saying, "Remember, friend, if I have taken a "kingdom from king Augustus, I have taken "nothing for my self."

night

night to Charles XIIth's camp, and had a private audience. The king read the letter, "gentlemen, says he to the plenipotentiaries, "I will give you my answer in a "moment." He immediately retired into his cabinet and wrote as follows :

"I consent to give peace upon the following conditions, in which it must not be expected that I shall make the least alteration :

I. That king Augustus renounce for ever the crown of Poland; that he acknowledge Stanislaus as lawful king, and that he promise never to remount the throne, not even after the death of Stanislaus.

II. That he renounce all other treaties, and particularly those he has made with Moscow.

III. That he send back with honour into my camp the princes Sobiesky, and all the prisoners he has been able to take.

IV. That he deliver into my hands all the deserters, which have entered into his service, and particularly John Patkul; and that all proceedings be stopped against such as have passed from his service into mine."

He gave this paper to count Piper, charging him to negotiate the rest with the plenipotentiaries of king Augustus. They were shocked at the severity of the propositions; and used all the little art men can employ, where power is wanting, to soften the rigour of the king of Sweden. They had several conferences

with count Piper, but could gain no other answer from him to all their persuasions, than “such is the will of the king my master, and he never changes his resolutions.”

Whilst this peace was silently negotiating in Saxony, fortune seemed to put king Augustus into a condition of obtaining one more honourable, and of treating with his conqueror upon a more equal foot.

Prince Menzicoff, generalissimo of the Moscovite army, brought him into Poland a body of thirty thousand men, at a time when he not only did not desire their assistance any longer, but even feared it. He had with him some Polish and Saxon troops, which in all made up about six thousand men; surrounded with this small body by prince Menzicof's army, he was under the most terrible apprehensions, in case they should discover his negotiation. He saw himself at the same time dethroned by his enemy, and in danger of being detained a prisoner by his ally. In this nice circumstance there appeared in view of the army one of the Swedish generals, named Maderfield, at the head of ten thousand men at Calish, near the palitinate of Posnania. Prince Menzicof pressed king Augustus to give them battle. The king in the utmost perplexities delayed it under several pretexts; for though the enemy had but one third number, there were four thousand Swedes in Maderfield's army, and that was enough to render the

the event doubtful; and to fall upon the Swedes during the negotiation and lose the victory, was to ruin him past all redemption. He therefore determined to send a person upon whom he could rely to the general of the enemy, to let him into part of the secret of the peace, and advise him to retreat; but this advice had a very different effect from what was expected. General Maderfield imagined that a snare was laid to intimidate him, and upon the bare force of that imagination he resolved to risk the battle.

The Moscovites that day conquered the Swedes in a pitched battle for the first time. This victory, which king Augustus gained almost against his own inclination, was complete, and he entered triumphant in the midst of his bad fortune into Warsaw, formerly the capital of his kingdom, but then a dismantled and ruined town, ready to receive any conqueror, and to acknowledge the strongest for king. He was tempted to seize upon this moment of prosperity, and to fall upon the king of Sweden in Saxony with the Moscovite army. But upon recollection, judged it better to comply with the terms the king of Sweden should impose upon him. These terms were made more severe, when Charles had information, that king Augustus had fallen upon his troops during the negotiation.

Augustus had just sung Te Deum at Warsaw, when Finsten, one of his plenipotentiaries

ries, arrived from Saxony, with the treaty of peace, which deprived him of his crown. He paused a while, but signed it, and then set out for Saxony, in vain hopes, that his presence might soften the king of Sweden, and that his enemy would perhaps call to mind the ancient alliances of their houses, and the blood which united them.

The two princes had their first interview at Gunterdsdorf in count Piper's quarters, without any ceremony. Charles XII. was in jack-boots, with a piece of black taffety tied round his neck instead of a cravat: his cloaths were as usual made of a coarse blue cloth, with brass buttons. He had a long sword by his side, which had served him in the battle of Narva, and upon the pommel of which he would often lean. The conversation turned wholly upon those great boots. Charles XII. told king Augustus, he had not laid them aside for six years, except when he went to sleep. These trifles were the sole discourse, that passed between two kings, one of whom had dispossessed the other of a crown. Augustus spoke all the while with an air of complaisance and satisfaction, which princes and men habituated to great affairs know how to assume amidst the most cruel mortifications. The two kings dined together several times afterwards. Charles always affected to give the right hand to king Augustus; but was so far from softening the rigour of his demands, that

that he made them still harder. He obliged the king elector, not only to send Stanislaus the jewels and records of the crown, but likewise to write him a letter of congratulation upon his accession. And he absolutely insisted upon the giving up of general Patkul without delay both of which he did.

Augustus was further obliged to order all the magistrates under him not to treat him as king of Poland any longer, and to efface the title he renounced out of the publick prayers. He was less concerned about setting the Sobiesky's at liberty; though these princes upon coming out of prison refused to see him; but the sacrifice of Patkul was a circumstance of great mortification. The czar on one side loudly demanded him back as his embassador, and on the other the king of Sweden made terrible threats, if they refused to give him up to him. Patkul was then shut up in the castle of Konisting in Saxony. King Augustus thought he might find an expedient to satisfy Charles XII. and his own honour at the same time. He sent his guards to deliver up the unhappy prisoner to the Swedish troops; but sent before a secret order to the governor of Konisting to let him escape. Patkul's ill fortune defeated the care that was taken to save him. The governor knowing him to be very rich, would have had him bought his liberty. But the prisoner relying still upon the law of nations; and informed of the intentions

tions of king Augustus, refused to pay for what he thought he should obtain for nothing. During this interval, the guards appointed to seize upon him arrived, and immediately gave him up to four Swedish officers, who carried him strait to the general quarters at Alranstad, where he continued three months tied to a stake with a heavy chain of iron, and thence he was carried to Casimir.

Charles XII. forgetting that Patkul was the czar's ambassador; and considering only that he was born his subject, ordered a council of war to pass sentence upon him with the utmost rigour. He was condemned to be broke alive and quartered. A chaplain came to let him know, that he was to die, without informing him of the manner of his punishment. When he was led to the place of punishment, and saw the wheels and stakes prepared for his execution, he fell into convulsions of terror, and threw himself into the arms of the minister, who embraced him, and covered him with his cloak, and wept over him. A Swedish officer then read aloud a paper, which contained his sentence.

He received sixteen blows, and endured the longest and most dreadful tortures, that can be imagined. When the czar had notice of the strange peace that king Augustus, notwithstanding their treaties, had concluded at Alranstad; and that Patkul his ambassador, and plenipotentiary had been given up to the
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king of Sweden in contempt of the laws of nations, he spread his complaints through all the courts of Europe; pressed them by the motive of their honour not to descend so low as to become guarantees for the peace of Altranstad, which Charles XII. would force upon them by threatening. These letters had no other effect, than to shew the power of the king of Sweden still more. They did not judge it convenient to exasperate Charles XII. by the refusal of the vain ceremony of being guarantees to a treaty.

He sought for a more advantageous revenge. The main body of his enemies army lay idle in Saxony. Levenhaup, the king of Sweden's general who was left in Poland with about twenty thousand men, was not able to guard the passes in a country without forts and full of factions. Stanislaus was in the camp of Charles XII. The emperor of Moscovy seizes upon this conjuncture, and re-enters Poland with above sixty thousand men; he divides them into several bodies, and marches with a flying camp as far as Leopold which was not garrisoned by the Swedes. He caused an assembly to be called together at Leopold, not much unlike that, which had dethroned Augustus at Warsaw.

During the conferences of Leopold the czar united in interests with the emperor of Germany through the common fear they had of the king of Sweden, secretly obtained of him

a number of German officers. These came daily to make a considerable augmentation in his forces, by bringing with them experience and discipline.

The confusion, multiplicity of factions, and continual ravages prevailing in Poland, hindered the diete of Leopold from coming to any resolution, for which reason, the czar transferred it to Lublin. But the change of place did not lessen the disorders and uncertainty, which all mankind were in ; and the assembly satisfied themselves with neither owning Augustus who had abdicated, nor Stanislaus, who had been elected against their inclinations but they were neither sufficiently united, nor resolute enough to name another king. During these fruitless deliberations, the party of the princes Sapiha, that of Oginsky, those who held in secret for king Augustus, and the new subjects of Stanislaus, all made war upon one another, ravaged each other's estates and finished the ruin of their country. The Swedish troops commanded by Levenhaup, of which one part lay in Livonia, another in Lithuania, and a third in Poland, were daily in pursuit of the Moscovite troops, and set fire to every thing that opposed Stanislaus. The Moscovites equally ruined friends and enemies, and nothing was to be seen but towns in ashes, and wandering troops of Poles, deprived of all their substance, who equally hated their

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their two kings, and Charles XII. and the czar.

King Stanislaus set out from Alranstad on the 15th of July 1707, with general Renchild, sixteen Swedish regiments, and great sums of money, to appease all these troubles in Poland, and make himself peaceably owned. He was acknowledged wherever he passed; the discipline of his troops, which the better exposed the barbarity of the Moscovites, gained him the people's inclinations; his extreme affability re-united to him almost all the factions, in proportion as it was known; and his money procured him the greatest part of the army of the crown. The czar fearing he should want provisions in a country, which his troops had laid desolate, retired into Lithuania, where he had appointed the rendezvous of the several branches of his army, and established magazines. This retreat left king Stanislaus in the peaceable possession of almost all Poland.

The king of Sweden was then receiving ambassadors in his camp at Alranstad, from almost all the princes in Christendom. Some desired him to quit the dominions of the empire, and others pressed him to turn his arms against the emperor; and it was then a current report, that he designed to join with France, in depressing the house of Austria. Among these ambassadors, was the famous John duke of Marborough, sent by queen

queen Anne of Great-Britain. He did France as much mischief by his understanding, as by his arms.

In conjunction with prince Eugene, the companion of his victories, and Heinsius the grand pensionary of Holland, he supported all the weight of the enterprizes of the allies against France. He knew that Charles was exasperated against the empire and the emperor; that he was secretly solicited by the French; and that if this conqueror should join himself to Lewis XIV. the allies would be undone.

As soon as the duke was arrived at Lipsick, where Charles then was, he applied himself secretly, to baron Goerts, in hopes of discovering the king's intentions. At last he had his publick audience at Lipsick.

Upon his first address to the king, he had a private audience of an hour long. When he spoke of war in general, he thought he perceived in his majesty a natural aversion towards France, and observed that he was pleased when he talked of the conquests of the allies. He mentioned the czar to him, and took notice that his eyes always kindled at his name, notwithstanding the moderation of the conferences; and he further remarked, that a map of Moscovy lay before him upon the table. He wanted no more to determine him in his judgment, that the real design of the king of Sweden and his sole ambition

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were to dethrone the czar, as he had already done the king of Poland. He understood that he had no other views by continuing in Saxony, than to impose by that means certain hard laws upon the emperor of Germany. But he knew that the emperor would comply with them, and that thus matters would be easily made up. He left Charles XII. to his natural inclination; and being satisfied with having discovered his intentions, he made him no kind of proposal.

King Charles, who had not as yet experienced ill fortune, or even any interruption of his successes, thought that one year would be sufficient for dethroning the czar, and that then he might return and raise himself by his own power to the dignity of arbiter of Europe; but he had a mind first to bring down the spirit of the emperor of Germany.

Charles at last having obliged the emperor to submit to such conditions as he pleased; given laws to the empire, protected the Lutheran religion in the midst of Roman-catholics, dethroned one king, crowned another, and seen himself the terror of all the princes around him, prepared for his departure*.

At

* The army was already upon their march, and passed near Dresden. Charles was at their head, and riding according to his custom about

And at last the victorious Charles XII. quitted † Saxony with an army of three and forty

a quarter or half a mile before his guards. They lost sight of him all at once, and some of his officers spurred on their horses to see where he was; but with all their inquiry they could not find him. The whole army took the alarm in a moment. They made a halt, and the generals met together; and whilst they were in great consternation, they learnt at last from a Saxon, who was passing by, what was become of him.

He had a mind, as he passed so near Dresden, to make a visit to king Augustus. He entered the town on horseback, attended by three or four general officers, and went directly to alight at the palace. He was got as far as the elector's apartment, before it was known that he was in the town. General Fleming having seen the king of Sweden at a distance, had only time to run and inform his master. All that could be done upon such an occasion, was presented to the idea of the minister, who laid it before Augustus; but Charles entered the chamber in his boots, before Augustus had time to recover from his surprise. He was then sick and in a night-gown, but dressed himself presently. Charles breakfasted with him as a traveller, who came to take leave of his friend, and then he expressed his desire of viewing the fortifications.

† Sept. 1707.

Augustus

forty thousand men, shinning with gold and silver, and loaded with the spoils they had got in Poland and Saxony.

Count Levenhaup, one of his best generals, at the same time waited for him in Poland with twenty thousand men; and he had besides another army of fifteen thousand in Finland; and fresh recruits were coming to him from Sweden.

The emperor of Moscovy was then in Lithuania, employed in keeping up the spirits of a party, which king Augustus seemed to have renounced. His troops, divided into several bodies, fled on all sides upon the first report of the king of Sweden's approach. The czar having ordered his general not to

Augustus, accordingly walked with him round them. Charles having passed a few hours in this strange kind of visit, embraced Augustus, and took his leave. When he returned to his own army, he found his generals at a council of war; demanding why they were thus assembled? General Renschild told him, that they had come to a resolution to lay siege to Dresden, provided his majesty had been kept a prisoner there. "Right," replied the king, "they durst not, they durst not." Renschild, upon hearing that Augustus held an extraordinary council at Dresden, the next morning, said, "you see they are considering upon, what they ought to have done yesterday."

wait,

wait, with an unequal force, the arrival of Charles II. He was then towards the north at Grodno in Lithuania, about a hundred leagues from Leopold.

Charles left Stanislaus in Poland with ten thousand Swedes and his new subjects to assist him in the preservation of his kingdom, and marched at the head of his horse amidst ice and snow towards Grodno †.

|| In the midst of this victorious march, the king of Sweden received a solemn embassy from the Turks. The Turkish ambassador presented Charles with an hundred Swedish soldiers; who having been taken by the Calmouks, sold in Turkey, and redeemed by the grand seignior, were sent by him to the king as the most agreeable present he could make him; not that the Ottoman pride pretended to pay homage to the glory of Charles XII. but because the sultan, a natural enemy to the emperors of Moscow and Germany, was desirous of strengthening himself against them by the friendship of Sweden, and the alliance of Poland. The ambassador complimented Stanislaus upon his advancement to the crown; and thus he was owned as king in a very little time by Germany, France, England, Spain, and Turkey. Whilst Charles was in Saxony, the czar had advanced as far as Leopold*.

* Situate on the southern extremity of Poland.

† In January 1708.

He

He had already passed the Neimen within two leagues of the town, before the czar knew any thing of his march. Upon the first news that the Swedes were coming, the czar leaves the town by the north-gate, and Charles enters by the south. The king had with him but six hundred of his guards, the rest not being able to follow him; and the czar fled with above two thousand men, upon supposition that a whole army was entering into Grodno; but he learnt that very day from a Polish deserter, that he had quitted the place to no more than six hundred men, and that the body of the enemy's army was still above five leagues distant. He lost no time, but sent a detachment of fifteen hundred horse in the evening to surprise the king of Sweden in the town. The fifteen hundred Moscovites, favoured by the darkness of the night, advanced as far as the first Swedish guard without being known. This guard consisted of thirty men; and they alone sustained the attack of fifteen hundred for half a quarter of an hour. The king who lay at the other end of the town came up presently with his six hundred guards; and the Moscovites fled with precipitation. His army were not long without joining him, nor he without pursuing the enemy. All the Moscovite troops who were dispersed in Lithuania, retired in haste eastward into the palatinate of Minsky, near the frontiers of Moscovy,

where their rendezous was appointed. The Swedes, pursued them for above thirty leagues of their way. Those who fled and those who pursued, made excessive marches almost every day, though in the midst of winter*.

King Charles, had provided biscuit for the subsistence of his army, so that nothing stopped him in his march. After he had crossed the forest of Minsky, where his men were obliged every moment to cut down trees to make way for his troops and baggage, he found himself before the river Berezine over against Borisflow †.

The czar had got together the best part of his troops in that place, and intrenched himself to advantage. His design was to hinder the Swedes from passing the river. Charles posted some of his regiments on the banks of

* From Grodno to the Borysthenes eastward lie nothing but morasses, deserts, mountains, and immense forests; in such places as are cultivated there was no provision to be found; the country people buried all their grain under ground, and whatever else could be preserved there. In order to discover these subterraneous magazines, they were obliged to sound the earth with long poles pointed with iron. The Moscovites and Swedes served themselves with these provisions by turns; but they were not always found, nor did they prove sufficient, when they were discovered.

† June 25, 1708.

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the Berezine, directly against Borislow, as though he meant to attempt the passage in sight of the enemy. At the same time he leads his army about three leagues up the river, throws a bridge over it, cuts his way through a body of three thousand men, who defended that post, and marches to the enemy without stopping. The Moscovites did not wait however for his coming up, but immediately decamped, and retreated towards the Borysthenes, spoiling all the roads, and spreading destruction wherever they passed, to retard the progress of the Swedes.

Charles advancing still towards the Borysthenes, met with twenty thousand Moscovites in his way, intrenched in a place named Hollofin, behind a morass, which could not be come at without passing a river. He did not wait for the assault till the rest of his infantry came up, but threw himself into the water at the head of his foot-guards, and crossed the river and the morass, with the water sometimes above his shoulders. Whilst he thus marched against the enemy, he ordered his horse to pass round the morass, and fall upon them in flank. The Moscovites in amaze, that no barrier could defend them, were at the same time routed by the king on foot, and by the Swedish horse.

The horse having made their way through the enemy, joined the king in the midst of the battle. He then mounted on horseback,

but some time after finding a young Swedish gentleman, named Gullenstiern, whom he very much esteemed, wounded in the field, and unable to march, he obliged him to take his horse, and continued to command on foot at the head of his infantry. Of all the battles he had ever fought, this was the most glorious, wherein he was exposed to the most dangers, and where he shewed the greatest abilities.

The Moscovites obliged to fly, repassed the Borysthenes, which separates the dominions of Poland from their own country. Charles lost no time in the pursuit, he crossed that great river after them at Mohilou, the last town in Poland.

The czar, was inclined to a peace, and even ventured some proposals by a Popish gentleman, whom he sent to the Swedish army. Charles XII. who had not been used to grant peace to his enemies, but in their capital cities, only answered, "I will treat with the czar at Moscow." When this haughty answer was reported to the czar, "My brother Charles," said he, "still affects to act the Alexander, but I flatter myself he will not find a Darius in me." The czar retreated, to Smolensko ||, and the king followed

|| This country lies about thirty leagues northward from Mohilou, upon the frontiers of Poland

followed by long marches; and so close, that part of the rear-guard of the Moscovites was frequently engaged with the dragoons of the Swedish van-guard. The latter had generally the advantage; but they weakened themselves even by conquering in these small skirmishes, which were never decisive, and in which they always lost abundance of men.

The king met † a body of ten thousand horse and six thousand Calmouks near Smolensko. He fell upon this army with only six regiments of horse, and four thousand foot; broke their ranks upon the first onset at the head of his Ostrogothick regiment, and forced the enemy to retreat. He advanced upon them through rough and hollow ways, where the Calmouks lay hid; they then appeared again, and threw themselves between the regiment where the king was fighting and the rest of the Swedish army. The Moscovites and Calmouks in an instant surrounded this regiment, and made their way quite up to his majesty. They killed two Aides de Camp, who fought near his person. The king's horse was slain under him; and as one of his equerries was presenting him with another, both the equerry and horse

land and Muscovy; and in which lies the great road from Poland to Moscow.

† Sept. 22, 1708.

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were struck dead upon the spot. Charles fought on foot, surrounded by some of his officers, who immediately flew to relieve him.

Several of them were taken, wounded, or slain, or carried off to a distance from the king by the multitude that fell upon them, so that only five men were left about him. He was quite spent with fatigue, having killed above a dozen of the enemy with his own hand, without receiving so much as one wound. At last colonel Dardoff forced his way through the Calmouks with a single company of his regiment, and came time enough to disengage the king. The rest of the Swedes put the Tartars to the sword. The army recovered its ranks, Charles mounted his horse, and fatigued as he was, pursued the Moscovites two leagues.

Charles was still in the great road to the capital of Moscovy §. He having made a review

§ From Smolensko, near which this battle was fought, to Moscow, are about a hundred French leagues; and the roads in themselves not worse than those, through which the Swedes had already passed; but they had information, that the czar had not only made all these roads impassable, either by laying such parts of them under water, as lay near the marshes, or, by digging very deep

view of his whole army, and taken an account of their provisions, found that he had not a sufficient quantity to subsist them for fifteen days. General Levenhaup, who was appointed to bring him a supply with a reinforcement of fifteen thousand men, was not yet come up; he therefore resolved to quit the road to Moscow, and turn to the south towards Ukrania, into the country of the Cossacks †. The Ukrainians had the privilege at first of choosing a prince under the name of general, but they were soon after deprived of this right, and their general was nominated by the court of Moscow. That station was then filled by a Polish gentleman, named Mazeppa, born in the palatinate of Podolia.

deep ditches at certain distances, or by covering the way with the wood of whole forests which his soldiers had cut down; but also they learnt that he had set fire to all the villages, both on the right side, and the left. The winter was coming on, and there was little appearance of making any speedy advances into the country, and none of subsisting there; and the whole body of the Moscovite forces might unexpectedly fall upon the king of Sweden through by-ways, which he was not acquainted with.

† It lies between the less Tartary, Poland and Muscovy, and reaches about a hundred French leagues from S. to N. and near as many from E. to W.

One day as he sat at table with the czar at Moscow, the emperor proposed to him to discipline the Cossques, and render those people more dependent. Mazeppa answered that the situation of Ukrania, and the genius of the nation, were obstacles not to be surmounted. The czar, who was somewhat overheated with wine, and did not always command his passion, called him traytor, and threatned to have him empaled.

Mazeppa, upon his return into Ukrania, laid the scheme of a revolt. The Swedish army which appeared soon after upon the frontiers, opened him an easy way to it; and he took a resolution of becoming independent, and raising himself a powerful kingdom out of Ukrania, and the ruins of the Russian empire. He was a person of great courage, of an enterprising genius, and indefatigable labour; he entered into a secret league with the king of Sweden to hasten the downfall of the czar, and make his own advantage of it. The king appointed the rendezvous near the river Desna. Mazeppa promised to met him there with thirty thousand men, proper ammunitions and provisions, and all his treasures, which were immense. The Swedish army therefore was ordered to march towards that side of the country to the great astonishment of all the officers, who knew nothing of the king's treaty with the Cossques. Charles sent orders

ders to Levenhaup, to bring up his troops and provisions with all speed into Ukrania, where he designed to pass the winter, that having secured that country to himself, he might conquer Moscovy the next spring; and in the mean time he advanced towards the Desna†. They were obliged to cross a forest full fifty leagues broad, and full of marshes. General Lagercron, who marched before with five thousand men and pioneers, led the army thirty leagues westward out of the right way. And they had marched four days, before the king discovered the mistake. With difficulty they struck into the right road again, but left almost all their artillery and waggons behind, which were either stuck fast, or quite sunk in the mud.

They marched for twelve days in this painful and laborious manner, till they had eaten up the little biscuit that was left, and then they arrived quite spent with hunger and fatigue, upon the banks of the Desna, in the place where Mazeppa had appointed to meet them; but, instead of the prince, they found a body of Moscovites advancing towards the other side of the river. The king was very much astonished, but resolved immediately to pass the Desna, and attack the enemy. The banks of the river were so steep, that

†. This river falls into the Boristhenes at Kiou.

they were obliged to let the folders down with cords; and they crossed it according to their usual manner, some by swimming, and others on floats hastily made. The body of Moscovites, which arrived at the same time, were not above eight thousand men; so that they made but small resistance.

Charles advanced farther into this wretched country, uncertain of his road and Mazeppa's fidelity. Mazeppa appeared at last, but rather as a fugitive than a powerful ally. For, the Moscovites having discovered and prevented his designs. They had fallen upon the Cosaques and cut them in pieces; his principal friends were taken sword in hand, and thirty of them had been broke upon the wheel. His towns were laid in ashes, his treasures plundered, the provisions he was preparing for the king of Sweden, seized; and he was scarce able to escape himself with six thousand men, and some few horses loaden with gold and silver. However, he gave the king hopes of supporting him by his intelligences in this unknown country, and the affection of all the Cosaques, who enraged against the Moscovites, came in troops to the camp, and brought them provisions.

Charles hoped at least that general Levenhaup would come and repair this ill fortune. He was to bring with him about fifteen thousand Swedes, which were more valuable than a hundred thousand Cosaques, with provisions

sions and ammunition and victuals. He arrived at last, but almost in the same condition as Mazeppa.

He had already passed the Borysthenes above Mohilon, and advanced about twenty leagues further, on the road to Ukrania. He brought the king a convoy of eight thousand waggons, with the money he had raised in Lithuania; and as he was upon his march, upon coming up towards Lesno, near the place where the rivers of Pronia and Sossa join to disembogue themselves far below into the Borysthenes, the czar appeared at the head of fifty thousand men.

The Swedish general, who had not quite sixteen thousand, resolved not to intrench. At four in the afternoon general Bayer brought the czar a reinforcement of troops. The battle was then renewed for the third time, with more fury and eagerness than ever, and lasted still night came on. At last numbers carried it. The Swedes were broken, routed, and driven as far as to their baggage. Levenhaup rallied his troops behind his waggons, and though the Swedes were conquered, they did not fly. They were about nine thousand in number, and not a single man of them ran away. The czar, on the other side passed the night under arms, and commanded his officers under pain of being cashiered, and his soldiers under pain of death, not to stir for plunder.

The next morning at day-break he ordered a fresh assault. Levenhaup had retired to an advantageous ground at some miles distance, after having nailed down part of his cannon, and set fire to his waggons. The Moscovites came time enough to hinder the whole convoy from being consumed in the flames; they seized upon six thousand waggons, which they saved. The czar, who was desirous of completing the defeat of the Swedes, sent general Flug to fall upon them again the fifth time; and the general offered them an honourable capitulation. Levenhaup refused it, and the fifth battle was as bloody as any of the former. Of the nine thousand soldiers he had left, he lost one half, and the other remained unbroken. At last night coming on, Levenhaup, after having sustained five battles against fifty thousand men, swam over the Sossia, followed by the five thousand men he had left alive, and the wounded were carried over on floats. The czar lost above twenty thousand Moscovites in these five engagements. Levenhaup then came to his master's camp with the honour of having made so good a defence, but bringing with him neither ammunition nor army.

In this extremity the memorable winter of 1709, which was still more terrible in those frontiers of Europe, than it was in France, carried off part of his army. Charles resolved to brave the seasons, as he had done his enemies,

Charles XII. of Sweden.

enemies, and ventured to make long marches with his troops during the excessive severity of the weather §. Nothing could reach his camp; as there lay between him and Stockholm near five hundred leagues, and an enemy superior in number to encounter.

§ In one of these marches two thousand of his men were frozen to death almost before his eyes. The horsemen had no boots, and the foot were without shoes, and almost without clothes. They were forced to make stockings of the skins of beasts, in the best manner they could. They often wanted bread. They were obliged to throw the best part of their cannon into quagmires and rivers, for want of horses to draw them along. So that this once flourishing army was reduced to four and twenty thousand men ready to perish for hunger. They no longer received news from Sweden, nor were able to send thither. In this condition only one officer complained. "How," says the king, "are you uneasy that you are so far from your wife? If you are a true soldier I will carry you to that distance, that you shall scarce hear from Sweden once in three years. A soldier ventured with a murmur to present him in presence of the whole army, with a piece of bread that was black and mouldy, made of barley and oats, the only food they then had, nor had they enough of this: the king received the piece of bread without the least emotion, eat it entirely up, and then said coldly to the soldier; It is not good, but may be eaten.

The

The czar, who was as active as the king of Sweden, after having sent fresh forces into Poland to the assistance of the confederates, united under general Siniaufski against Stanislaus, advanced very soon into Ukrania in the midst of this severe winter to oppose the king of Sweden. He continued there with the artful view of weakening the enemy by small engagements. The cold at last obliged the two enemies to agree upon a suspension of arms. But upon the first of February they began to engage again in the midst of ice and snows: After several small skirmishes, and some disadvantages, the king's army was reduced in April, to eighteen thousand Swedes. Mazeppa alone, the prince of the Cosaques, supplied them with the necessaries of life. Charles, with his eighteen thousand Swedes, and as many Cosaques, had not laid aside the design, or hopes, of penetrating as far as Moscow. Towards the end of May he went to lay siege to Pultowa *, where the czar had erected a magazine. If the king took it, it would open him the road to Moscow, and in the abundance he should then possess, he could at least wait for the coming up of the succours he still expected from Sweden, Li-

* Situated on the river Vorflat, on the borders of Ukrania eastward, about thirteen long leagues from the Borysthenes.

vonias, Pomerania, and Poland. His sole refuge being then in the conquest of Pultowa he carried on the siege with vigour. Mázeppa, who had a correspondence in the town, assured him he would soon be master of it; and hope began to revive in his army. Prince Menzikof, notwithstanding all his precautions, threw fresh troops into the town, and the garrison by this means amounted to almost ten thousand men.

The king continued the siege with still more warmth, he carried the advanced works and even gave two assaults to the body of the place. The siege was in this condition, when the king, having rode into the river to take a nearer view of some of the works, received a shot from a carbine, which pierced through his boot, and shattered the bone of his heel. There was not the least alteration observed in his countenance, by which it could be suspected that he was wounded; he continued calmly to give orders, and remained near six hours on horseback afterwards. One of his domesticks at last perceiving that the sole of his boot was bloody, made haste to call the surgeons; and the king's pain then began to be so sharp, that they were forced to take him off his horse, and carry him into his tent. The surgeons when they had examined the wound, were of opinion, that the leg must be cut off. The army was in the utmost consternation. But one of the surgeons,

geons, named Newman, who was better skilled, and more courageous than the rest, was positive that by making deep incisions he could save the king's leg. "Fall to work then presently," says the king, "cut boldly, fear nothing." He held the leg himself with both his hands, looking upon the incisions that were made, as though the operation had been performed upon another person.

As they were laying on the dressing, he gave orders for an assault the next morning; but the orders were scarce given, before word was brought him, that the czar appeared with an army of about seventy thousand men. And now Charles, wounded and incapable of acting, saw himself inclosed between the Borysthenes, and the river which runs to Pultowa, in a desert country, without any places of security, or ammunition, and opposed to an army, which prevented him either from retreating, or being supplied with provisions. In this extremity he did not assemble any council of war, as might have been expected; but at night § sent for Mareschal Renschild into his tent, and ordered him without deliberation and without uneasiness, to prepare to attack the czar the next morning. Renschild did not dispute his master's

July 7th.

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will, but went out with a resolution to obey him.

The next day * the decisive battle of Pultowa was fought between the two most famous monarchs then in the world. The place where this battle was fought was situated thus: Pultowa lay on the north, the camp of the king of Sweden on the south, drawing a little towards the east, his baggage about a mile behind him, and the river of Pultowa on the north of the town, running from east to west.

The czar had passed the river about a league from Pultowa towards the west, and was beginning to form his camp.

At day-break the Swedes appeared out of their camp, with four iron cannons for their whole artillery; the rest were left in the camp, with about three thousand men; and four thousand remained with the baggage. So that the Swedish army which marched against the enemy, consisted of above five and twenty thousand men, whereof there were not above twelve thousand regular troops. The king conducted the march, carried in a litter at the head of his foot. A party of horse advanced, by his order, to attack that of the enemy. The battle began with this engagement, at half an hour after

* July 8, 1709.

four in the morning. The enemies horse lay westward, on the right of the Moscovite camp; prince Menzicof and count Gallowin had placed them at a distance, between redoubts fortified with cannon. General Slipenback, at the head of the Swedes, fell upon them. All who have served in the Swedish troops know that it was almost impossible to resist the fury of their first shock. The Moscovite squadrons were broken and routed. The czar himself ran to rally them, and his ~~horse~~ was shot through with a musket-ball; Menzicof had three horses killed under him; and the Swedes cried Victory.

Charles did not doubt but the battle was gained; he had dispatched general Creuts, about midnight, with five thousand horse, or dragoons, who were to take the enemy in flank, whilst he attacked them in front; but the misfortune was, that Creuts went out of the way, and did not appear. The czar, who had thought himself lost, had time to rally his horse: he fell upon the king's cavalry in his turn, which not being supported by Creuts's detachment, was broken likewise, and Slipenbak taken prisoner in the engagement. At the same time seventy-two cannons from the camp played upon the Swedish horse, and the Russian foot opening from their lines, advanced to attack the Swedish in fantry. The czar immediately detached prince Menzicof to post himself between Pul-

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towa and the Swedes; prince Menzicof executed his masters orders with dexterity and expedition; and not only cut off the communication between the Swedish army and the troops remaining in the camp before Pultowa, but, meeting with a corps de reserve of three thousand men, he surrounded them and cut them in pieces.

In the mean time the Moscovite foot came out of their lines, and advanced in order into the plain; and, on the other side, the Swedish horse rallied within a quarter of a league from the enemy's army; and the king, assisted by general Renschild, made a disposition for a general engagement. He ranged what troops were left him in two lines; his foot were posted in the center, and his horse made up the two wings. The czar disposed his army in the same manner; he had the advantage of numbers, and of seventy-two cannon, whilst the Swedes had no more than four, and began to want powder.

The emperor of Moscovy was in the center of his army, having then the title only of major-general, and seemed to serve under general Cseremetoff. But he went as emperor from rank to rank, mounted on a Turkish horse, which was a present from the grand signior, animating the officers and soldiers, and promising every one of them rewards.

Charles

Charles did all he could to sit his horse at the head of his troops ; but finding the posture too painful, he returned to his litter, holding his sword in one hand, and a pistol in the other.

At nine in the morning the battle was renewed ; one of the first discharges of the Moscovite cannon carried off the two horses of the king's litter ; he caused two others to be immediately put to it, and a second volley broke the litter in pieces and overturned the king. The troops which fought near him believed him killed. The Swedes, in a consternation lost ground, and the enemy's cannon continuing to play on them, the first line fell back upon the second, and the second fled. In this last action the Swedish army was routed by a single line of ten thousand men of the Moscovite foot ; so much were matters changed.

The king, carried upon pikes by four grenadiers, covered with blood, and all over bruised with his fall, and scarce able to speak, cried out, " Swedes, Swedes." Anger and grief renewing his strength, he tried to rally some of his regiments. But the Moscovites closely pursued them with their swords, bayonets, and pikes. The prince of Wirtemberg, generals Renschild, Hamilton, and Stakelberg, were already taken prisoners, the camp before Pultowa forced, and all in a confusion which did not admit of any remedy.

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Count Piper, with all the officers of the chancery, had quitted the camp, and neither knew what to do, nor what was become of the king: they ran from one side of the plain to the other. Major Bere offered to lead them to the baggage; but the clouds of dust and smoak which covered the field, and their own confusion, carried them strait to the counterscarp of the town, where they were all taken prisoners by the garrison. The king would not fly, and could not defend himself. General Poniatosky chanced to be by him at that instant; he was a colonel of the Swedish guards of king Stanislaus, and a person of uncommon merit, whom his attachment to the person of Charles had engaged to follow him into Ukrania, without any post in the army. He made a sign to a young Swede, named Frederick, the king's first valet de chambre, and as intrepid as his master; they took the king under the arms, and, assisted by a Drabant who came up to them, mounted him on horseback, notwithstanding the excessive pain of his wound. The valet mounted another horse, riding near his master, and supporting him from time to time.

Poniatosky, though he had no command in the army, drew up five hundred horse near the king's person; some of them Drabans, others officers, and others private troopers. This body, reanimated by the mis-

misfortune of their prince, made their way through more than ten regiments of Moscovites, and conducted Charles, through the midst of the enemy, the space of a league, to the baggage of the Swedish army.

This surprising retreat was of great consequence in such distress; but the king was under a necessity of flying still further. They found amongst the baggage count Piper's coach, for the king never had one since he left Stockholm. They put him into it, and made towards the Boristhenes with all possible speed*.

Whilst the king was getting off, the Moscovites seized upon the artillery in the camp before Pultowa, his baggage, and the money

* The king, who, from the time he was set on horseback till he came to the baggage, had never spoke one word, then asked what was become of count Piper. They told him he was taken, with all the officers of chancery: "and general Renchild, and the duke of Wirtemberg?" added the king. They are prisoners too, says Poniatosky. "Prisoners to Moscovites!" replied Charles, shrugging up his shoulders; "come on, then, let us go to the Turks rather." They did not observe, however, the least alteration in his countenance; and whoever had then seen him, and not known his condition, would have never suspected him to have been either conquered or wounded.

he

he had raited for carrying on the war, where they found six millions in specie, the spoils of Poland and Saxony. Near nine thousand Swedes were killed in the battle, about six thousand were taken, three or four thousand ran away, and were never heard of since. There still remained near eighteen thousand men, comprehending the Cosaques, with the Swedes, and Poles, who fled towards the Borysthenes, under the direction of general Levenhaup. He marched one way with these fugitive troops, whilst the king took another with some of his horse. The coach in which he rode broke down in his march, and they set him again on horseback; and, to finish his misfortune, he wandered all night in a wood; there his courage not being able to supply any longer his exhausted spirits, and the pain of his wound becoming more insupportable by fatigue, and his horse falling under him through excessive weariness, he rested himself for some hours at the foot of a tree, in danger of being surpris'd every moment by the conquerors, who sought for him on all sides.

At last, at night †, he found himself upon the banks of the Borysthenes, and Levenhaup just arrived with the remains of his army.

† July 9.

The

The Swedes saw their king again, whom they judged to have been dead, with a joy mixed with sorrow. The enemy drew nigh, and they had no bridge to pass the river, nor time to make one, nor powder to defend themselves against the enemy who came upon them, nor provisions to hinder the army from perishing with hunger, who had eat nothing for two days. Almost all the officers imagined they were to halt there, in expectation of the Moscovites, and that they were either to conquer or die on the banks of the Boristhenes; and the king had undoubtedly taken that resolution, had he not been quite spent with fatigue. His wound was now come to a suppuration, attended with a fever; Charles was therefore no longer himself, but was carried like a sick person in a state of insensibility. By good fortune there was still left a sorry calash, which by chance they had brought along with them; this they embarked in a little boat, and the king and general Mazeppa in another. The latter had saved several coffers full of money, but the current being very rapid, and a violent wind beginning to blow, the Cosaque threw more than three parts of his treasures into the river, to lighten the boat. Mullern, the king's chancellor, and count Poniatosky, who was now more than ever necessary to the king, for his remarkable presence of mind under difficulties, crossed over in other barks with

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some of the officers. Three hundred troopers of the king's guard, and a very great number of Poles and Cossacks, relying upon the goodness of their horses, ventured to pass the river by swimming. Their troop keeping close together, resisted the current, and broke the waves; but all who attempted to cross separately a little below, were carried away by the stream, and sunk in the river. Of all the foot who tried to pass over, there was not one who got to the other side.

Whilst the routed part of the army was in this extremity, prince Menzikoff came up with ten thousand horse, having each a foot soldier behind him. The carcases of the Swedes that lay dead in the way, of their wounds, fatigue and hunger, sufficiently pointed out to prince Menzikoff the road which the body of the army had taken. The prince sent a trumpet to the Swedish general to offer him a capitulation. Four general officers were presently sent by Levenhaup to receive the law of the conqueror. There was only one colonel, named Troutfetre, who, when he saw the Moscovites approach, placed himself at the head of a battalion, with an intent to attack them, and hoping that his example would animate the rest of the army with the same resolution; but Levenhaup was obliged to oppose this unavailing ardour. The capitulation was settled, and the whole army were made prisoners of war.

Some of the soldiers, in despair to fall into the hands of the Moscovites, threw themselves into the Borysthenes: two officers of the regiment commanded by the brave Troutfetre, killed themselves upon the spot, and the rest were made slaves. They all filed off in presence of prince Menzikoff, laying their arms at his feet, as thirty thousand Moscovites had done, nine years before, at the king of Sweden's at Narva. But whereas the king then sent back all the Moscovite prisoners, whom he was not afraid of, the czar retained all the Swedes that were taken at Pultowa §.

The emperor of Moscovy, elate with a joy he was under no concern to dissemble, re-

§ These unhappy creatures were afterwards dispersed in the czar's dominions, and particularly in Siberia, a vast province of the Greater Tartary, which extends itself eastward to the frontiers of the Chinese empire. Count Piper, the king of Sweden's first minister, was a long time imprisoned at Petersburgh. Piper died some years after at Moscow, having received but little assistance from his family, which lived in great opulence at Stockholm, and ineffectually lamented by his king, who would never condescend to offer a ransom for his minister, which he feared the czar would not accept; for there was never any cartel settled between Charles and the czar.

received

ceived upon the field of battle the prisoners they brought him, in troops, and asked every moment, "Where, then, is my brother Charles?"

He paid the Swedish generals the compliment of inviting them to dine with him. Amongst other questions, he asked general Renchild, "What number the troops of the king his master might amount to before the battle?" Renchild answered, "That the king only kept the list of them, which he never communicated to any body; but he thought the whole might be about thirty-five thousand men, whereof eighteen thousand were Swedes, and the rest Cosaques. The czar seemed surprised, and asked how they durst venture to penetrate into so distant a country, and lay siege to Pultowa, with such a handful of men! We were not always consulted, answers the Swedish general; but, as faithful servants, we obeyed our master's orders, without ever contradicting them.

When dinner was over, the czar ordered their swords to be restored to all the general officers, and conducted himself to them as a prince who had a mind to give his subjects lessons of generosity and civility, which he was well acquainted with.

Thus the Swedish army, which left Saxony so triumphant, was now no more. One half of them perished by want, and the other half were made slaves, or massacred. Charles

XII. had lost in one day the fruit of nine years pains, and almost a hundred battles. He fled in a wretched calash, having major-general Hoord by his side, dangerously wounded. The rest of his troops followed, some on foot, others on horseback, and some in waggons, across a desert, where they found neither huts, tents, men, animals, or roads; every thing was wanting there, even to water itself †. Count Poniatosky, who was a little better mounted than the rest, advanced before them into the plain, and having spied a willow, judged there must be water nigh, and he sought about, till he found the spring: this happy discovery saved the lives of the king of Sweden's little troop. After five days march he found himself upon the banks of the river Hippanis, now called the Bogh, by the barbarians. This river joins the Borysthenes some miles lower, and falls along with it into the Black Sea.

Beyond the Bogh, towards the south, lies the little town of Ozakou, a frontier of the Turkish empire. The inhabitants seeing a troop of soldiers coming towards them,

† It was then the beginning of July; the country situate in the 47th degree; the dry sand of the desert rendered the heat of the sun more insupportable; the horses fell by the way, and the men were ready to die with thirst.

whose

whose dress and language they were strangers to, refused to carry them over to Ozakou without an order from Mahamet Basha, the governor of the town. The king sent an express to the governor, to ask a passage; but the Turk not knowing what to do in a country where a false step very often costs a man his life, durst take nothing upon himself without having first the permission of the basha of the province, who resides at Bender in Bessarabia, thirty leagues from Ozakou. The permission came, with orders to pay the king all the honours due to a monarch allied to the porte, and to furnish him with all necessary provisions. During these delays, the Moscovites having passed the Borysthenes pursued the king with all possible speed, and, if they had come an hour sooner, they must have taken him. He had scarce passed the Bogh in the Turkish boats, before his enemies appeared, to the number of almost six thousand horse. And his majesty had the misfortune of seeing five hundred of his little troop, who had not been able to get over time enough, seized by the Moscovites on the other side the river.

The commander of Bender † sent presently an aga to compliment the king, and

† He was basha of the province, and serasquier; the former signifies a governor and intendant; the latter answers to that of a general.

offer him a magnificent tent, with provisions, baggage, waggons, and all the conveniencies, officers, and attendants requisite to conduct him handsomely to Bender.

As soon as Charles XII. was arrived at Ozakou, in the dominions of Sultan Achmet III. emperor of the Turks, he wrote a letter to him, in which he asked his protection, and endeavoured to stir him up to fall upon the czar; and for that purpose invited the emperor to enter into an alliance with him. But it was not till six months after that he received an answer; in which, with regard to what Charles had proposed concerning the czar, the emperor gave this answer: "This proposal requires a deliberate examination. I shall leave it to the wisdom of my great divan. I value your friendship, and grant you mine, together with my protection. I have given orders to the bashas of Natolia and Romelia, to provide a guard to conduct you safely where you think proper. Jussuf, the basha serasquier of Bender, will advance you five hundred dollars † a day, with all necessary provisions for yourself and your attendants, and horses, that you may live as a king.

"Given at Constantinople, the first day of the month Sheval, the 1121 year of the Hegira."

† Worth about a French crown, of three livres.

As this letter was not very favourable to the king's design, he made use of every method to gain the emperor to espouse his cause; and by the means of count Poniatofsky, who attended his embassy to Constantinople, brought over the sultana mother, and the vizir, to his interest; so that at one time he seemed very likely to gain a powerful assistance against the czar.

In the mean time Charles was honourably conducted to Bender. At his arrival there he had one thousand three hundred men with him, who were all fed and lodged, and their horses, at the expence of the grand signor. The king, at first, not choosing to lodge in the town, encamped near Bender, and had a magnificent tent provided for him by the serasquier Juffuf basha, and tents for his lords also. Some time after the king built a large hut, as did his officers, and his soldiers raised barracks; so that the camp in time became a little town. As soon as Charles was cured of his wound he renewed his usual exercises; indeed he sometimes amused himself with playing at chess, and acquired a taste for reading, and was particularly pleased with the French tragedy of Mithridates, who, like himself, was a vanquished king breathing vengeance. As to the king's affairs at the porte they did not long carry a promising aspect; the czar's money prevailed too much there, and the king found himself abandoned

by the grand vizir, deluded and scorned by the porte, and in a manner a prisoner among the Tartars. During the king's continuance here, Augustus was restored to the throne of Poland, the king of Denmark made a descent into Sweden, and all the other territories of king Charles were invaded. But at last the king of Sweden's interest prevailed in the seraglio, just at the time that Baltagi Mahomet had, for the second time, received the seals of the empire, and the first order this new grand vizir received, was to go and fall upon the Moscovites with two hundred thousand men. Baltagi Mahomet was not very fond of this commission, as he had never been in the field. As he received a sabre set with precious stones from the hands of the grand signor, "Your highness knows," says he, "I have been brought up to use an axe and fell wood, and not to wield a sword and command armies: I will endeavour to serve you in the best manner I am able; but if I fail of success, remember that I have intreated you not to lay it to my charge." The sultan having assured him of his good will, the vizir prepared to fulfil the orders of his master. The Moscovite ambassadors were immediately imprisoned in the castle of Seven Towers, according to the custom of the Turks when they are going to war with any state.

Orders were given for the Han, or Kam of Crim Tartary to get in readiness forty thousand Tartars.

Upon

Upon the news of the Turkish preparations, the czar left Moscow, and drew up an army of eight thousand men upon the frontiers of Poland, and marched with them into Moldavia and Walachia †.

A Greek named Cantemir, made prince of Moldavia by the Turks, joined the czar, whom he already looked upon as conqueror, and from whom he expected much greater advantages than he then enjoyed. The czar entered into a secret alliance with him, received him into his army, and marching up the country, arrived || at the northern side of the river Hierafus*.

As soon as the grand visir received the news that Peter Alexiowitz was come thither, he immediately left the camp at Belgrade, and following the course of the Danube, proposed to pass that river on a bridge of boats near Saccia, in the very same place where Darius formerly built a bridge that bore his name. The Turkish army marched with so much expedition, that they soon came in sight of the Moscovites, the river Pruth being between them.

† Formerly the country of the Daci, but at this time inhabited by Greek Christians, tributaries to the grand signor.

|| June 1711.

* Now Pruth, near Jazy, the capital of Moldavia.

The czar, sure of the prince of Moldavia, little thought the subjects would fail him. But the Moldavians feared the Christians, especially the Moscovites, who had upon all occasions used them barbarously. They brought all their provisions to the Ottoman army. The Walachians, whose country adjoins to that of Moldavia, shewed the same regard to the Turks; to such a degree had the remembrance of former cruelties alienated their minds from the Moscovites.

The czar, thus frustrated of his hopes, found his army on a sudden destitute of provisions, and without forage. In the mean time the Turks passed the river that separated them from the enemy. All the Tartars, according to custom, swam over it, holding by the tails of their horses. The Spahi's, which are the Turkish horse, did the same, because the bridges were not ready time enough. At length the whole army being got over, the vizir pitched a camp, and fortified it with trenches. The czar found himself without provisions, with the river Pruth behind him, and near one hundred and fifty thousand Turks before him, and about forty thousand Tartars continually harrassing him on the right hand and the left. Reduced to this extremity, he said publickly, "I am at least in as bad a case as my brother Charles was at Pultowa."

The indefatigable count Poniatosky, agent to the king of Sweden, was in the grand

vizir's army, with some Poles and Swedes, who all thought the czar's ruin inevitable.

Poniatosky sent an express to the king of Sweden, who set out that moment from Bender, followed by forty officers, and enjoying by anticipation the pleasure of fighting the emperor of Moscovy. After many a loss, and several destructive marches, the czar was driven back upon the Pruth, and had no cover left but some chevaux de frize, and and some waggons. A party of the Janissaries and Spahis fell immediately upon his army in that defenceless condition, but they did it in a tumultuous and disorderly manner, and were received by the Moscovites with a resolution, which nothing but despair and the presence of their prince could inspire.

The Turks were twice repulsed: but the day following, M. Poniatosky advised the grand visir to starve out the Moscovite army, who being destitute of all provision, would, in a day's time, be obliged, together with their emperor, to surrender at discretion.

The czar has, since that time, more than once acknowledged, that in all his life he never felt so much uneasiness as he did that night. He revolved in his mind all that he had been doing, for so many years, for the glory and good of his nation; that so many great designs, perpetually interrupted by successive wars, were now in all probability going to perish with him, before they were brought

brought to perfection; that he must either die with hunger, or engage near two hundred thousand men with feeble troops, less by half the number than when they first set out; a cavalry almost dismounted, and the foot worn out with famine and fatigue.

About the beginning of the night he called general Czeremetof to him, and gave him a peremptory order to get every thing ready by break of day, to charge the Turks, with bayonets at the muzzles of their muskets.

He gave express orders also to burn all the baggage, and that no officer should keep above one waggon; that, in case of a defeat, the enemy, however, might not get the booty they expected. Having settled every thing with the general in order to the battle, he retired into his tent, full of grief, and seized with convulsions; a distemper he was often troubled with, and which came upon him with double the violence when he was under any great uneasiness. He forbid all persons to enter his tent in the night, upon any pretence whatsoever; not caring to have any remonstrances made to him against a desperate but necessary resolution, and much less that any one should be a witness of the melancholy situation he was in.

In the mean time the greatest part of his baggage was burnt, according to his order, and all the army followed the example, tho' with much regret; but some buried such of
their

their things as were most valuable. The general officers had already given orders for the march, and endeavoured to inspire the army with a courage which themselves wanted: but the soldiers, quite exhausted with fatigue and hunger, marched without spirit and without hope; and yet, to enervate their courage still more, had their ears filled with shrieks and cries of women, of whom there was too great a number in the army. Every one expected death or slavery to be their portion the next morning.

There was at that time in the Moscovite camp a woman as extraordinary perhaps as the czar himself. She was then known only by the name of Catherine afterwards the czarina.

The czar was at supper with prince Meniczof when he first saw her and fell in love with her. In 1707, he married her privately. This woman being in the camp at Pruth, held a private council with the general officers, and Shaffirof the vice-chancellor, while the czar was in his tent.

They agreed, that it was necessary to sue for peace to the Turks, and that the czar must be persuaded into the proposal. The vice-chancellor wrote a letter to the grand vizir, in the name of his master, which the czarina, notwithstanding the emperor's prohibition, carried into the tent to him; and after much dispute, having prevailed upon him by her prayers and tears, to sign it; she

she took all her money and jewels, and every thing of value that she had about her, together with what she could borrow of the general officers, which in all amounted to a considerable present, and sent it with the czar's letter, to Osman Aga, lieutenant to the grand visir. Mahomet Baltagi answered haughtily with the air of a visir and a conqueror, "Let the czar send me his first minister, and I will see what is to be done." The vice-chancellor Shaffirof came immediately with a present in his hand, which he offered publickly to the grand visir. It was considerable enough to let him see they stood in need of him, but too little for a bribe.

The grand visir's first demand was, that the czar, with all his army, should surrender at discretion. The vice-chancellor made answer, that his master designed to give him battle within a quarter of an hour, and that the Moscovites would all be cut in pieces, rather than submit to such dishonourable conditions. Osman seconded Shaffirof with fresh remonstrances. Mahomet Baltagi was no soldier. He knew the janisaries had been repulsed the day before, and was easily persuaded by Osman not to part with certain advantages for the hazard of a battle. He immediately granted a suspension of arms for six hours, and in that time the terms of the treaty were agreed upon and settled.

In

In the mean time the kam of Tartary opposed the conclusion of a treaty, which took from him all hopes of pillage. Poniatosky seconded him with very urgent and pressing reasons. But Osman carried his point notwithstanding the impatience of the Tartar, and the insinuations of Poniatosky.

The visier thought it enough for his master the grand signor, to conclude an advantageous peace. He insisted, that the Moscovites should give up Asoph, burn the galleys that lay in that port, and demolish the important citadels upon the Palus Mæotis; that the grand signor should have all the cannon and ammunition of those fortresses; that the czar should draw off his troops from Poland, and give no further disturbance to the few Cossacks that were under the protection of the Poles, nor to those that were subject to Turkey; and that for the future he should pay the Tartars a subsidy of 40000 sequins per annum, an odious tribute long since imposed, but from which the czar had delivered his country.

At length the treaty was going to be signed without so much as mentioning the king of Sweden: and all that Poniatosky could obtain from the visir, was to insert an article, by which the Moscovites should promise not to obstruct or incommode the return of Charles XII. and which is pretty remarkable, it was stipulated in this article, that a peace should

be

be concluded between the czar and the king of Sweden, if they were so disposed, and could agree upon the terms of it. On those conditions the czar had liberty to retreat with his army, cannon, artillery, colours and baggage. The Turks furnished him with provisions, and there was plenty of every thing in his camp, within two hours after the signing of the treaty †. King Charles enraged, went directly to the grand-visir, and with an air of indignation upbraided him with the treaty he had concluded. I have authority, answered the grand visir, with a calm aspect, to wage war, and to make peace. But, replied the king, have not you the whole Moscovite army in thy power? Our law, says the visir, with great gravity, commands us to grant our enemies peace, when they implore our mercy. Ah! returned the king, in a violent emotion, does it command you to clap up a bad treaty when you have it in your power to impose what terms you please? Was it not in your power to carry the czar prisoner to Constantinople? To this the visir answered, satirically enough, it is not fit that all kings should be out of their kingdoms. This Charles only answered, with an indignant smile, and

11, July 21, 1711.

throw-

throwing himself carelessly on a sofa, looked at the visir with a countenance full of resentment and contempt, and at the same time stretched out his leg towards the visir, designedly entangled his spur in his robe, and tore it. He then left him, mounted his horse, and returned, full of despair, to Bender. When the king was gone, Poniatosky endeavoured to move the visir by milder methods to make more advantageous terms with the czar; but the visir without giving him any answer, left him to go and wash and attend his devotions, it being the hour of prayer according to the Mahometanism religion.

King Charles, on his return to Bender, finding that the river Neister had overflowed and spoiled his little camp, removed some miles distance, near a little village called Varnitza, and there built a large house of stone, strong enough, upon occasion, to sustain an assault of several hours. He also built two others, one for his chancery, and the other for his favourite Grothusen.

In the mean time, the visir, who feared king Charles's intrigues at the port, procured from the regency of Germany, the emperor being abroad, the promise of a safe and honourable passage through the dominions of Germany, for Charles to return to his own kingdom. The king was accordingly applied to to return home, but he obstinately refused; declaring he would not depart till

Achmet

Achmet had punished the visir, and supplied him with a hundred thousand men, that with them he might re-enter Poland. Sometime after Baltagi Mahomet was deposed and banished, and one Jussuf was appointed grand visir in his room. A new treaty was concluded with the czar, in which it was stipulated that Charles should be sent out of the Turkish dominions. And now the divan appeared determined to send him back with only a guard of seven, or eight thousand men. The king however, still struggled with his difficulties, and sometimes had hopes of success, but at last the sultan called an extraordinary divan, and, which is not common, spoke himself and asked, whether it would be a breach of the laws of hospitality to send king Charles away, and whether foreign princes ought to accuse him of cruelty, or injustice, in case he should be obliged to send him away by force? The divan answered the grand signor, that he might lawfully send him away. This opinion was confirmed by the musti, as agreeable to the mussulman's law, and he accordingly granted his fetfa.

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* The fetfa, is a kind of a mandate, which, for the most part accompanies the important orders of the grand signor. The fetfaes are revered

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The order and fetfa, were carried to Bender by the Bouiourk Imraour, grand master of the horse, and a Chiaous Basfa, first usher. The basfa of Bender received the order at the kam's, from whence he went immediately to Varnitsa, to know whether the king would go away in a friendly manner, or force him to execute the sultan's orders.

Charles XII. not used to this threatening language could not command his temper. Obey your master, says he to the basfa, if you dare, and be gone out of my presence. The basfa went off in a rage, with a full gallop, contrary to the manner of the Turks. The same day he discontinued the supply of the king's provisions, and removed the guard of the Janisaries. He sent also to the Poles and Cosaques at Varnitsa, to let them know, that if they had a mind to have any provisions they must leave the king of Sweden's camp, and come and put themselves under the protection of the porte at Bender. They all obeyed, and left the king, with only the officers of his household, and three hundred Swedes to cope with twenty thousand Tartars and six thousand Turks, and now there

renced as oracles, though the persons from whom they come, are as much the sultan's slaves as any others.

was

was no more provision in the camp either for man or horse.

Immediately the king gave orders to shoot twenty of the fine Arabian horses the grand signor had sent him, saying, I will neither have their provisions nor their horses. This made a noble feast for the Tartars, who think horse-flesh delicious feeding. In the mean time the Turks and Tartars invested the little camp on all sides.

The king, with all the calmness in the world, appointed his three hundred Swedes to make regular fortifications, and worked at them himself. His chancellor, treasurer, secretaries, valet de chambre's, and all his domesticks, put their hands to the work. Some barricadoed the windows, and others fastened beams behind the doors in the form of buttresses. When the house was well barricadoed, and the king had taken a view of his supposed fortifications, he sat calmly down to chess with his favourite Grotiusen, as if every thing had been perfectly safe and secure. In the mean time every thing being ready for the assault, Charles's death seemed inevitable : but the sultan's command being not positively to kill him in case of resistance, the basha prevailed upon the kam to let him send an express that moment to Adrianople, where the grand signor then was, to receive his highness's last orders.

At

At length, the grand signor's orders being come, to put to the sword all the Swedes that should make the least resistance, and not to spare the life of the king; the basha had the civility to shew Fabricius the order, to the intent that he might try his utmost to prevail upon Charles. Fabricius went immediately to acquaint him with this bad news. "Tell them then," says the king, "that this order is a second forgery of theirs, and that I will not go." Fabricius fell at his feet, put himself in a passion, and reproached him with his obstinacy; but all was to no purpose. "Go back to your Turks," says the king to him smiling, "if they attack me, I know how to defend myself."

The king's chaplains also fell upon their knees before him, conjuring him not to expose the wretched remains of Pultowa, and, above all, his own sacred person to certain death. The king, who had shewed no resentment against Fabricius, grew warm upon this occasion, and told his priests, that he took them to pray for him, and to give him advice.

General Hord and general Dardoff, whose opinion it had always been, not to venture a battle, which in the consequence must prove fatal, shewed the king their breasts, covered with wounds they had received in his service; and assuring him, that they were ready to die for him, begged that it
might

might at least be upon a more necessary occasion. "I know," says the king, "by your wounds and my own, that we have fought valiantly together. You have hitherto done your duty: do it again now." There was nothing more to be said, they must obey. Every one was ashamed not to court death with the king. His majesty being prepared for the assault; entertained himself in secret with the pleasure and honour of sustaining the shock of a whole army with three hundred Swedes. He appointed every man to his post. His chancellor Mullern, the secretary Empreus, and his clerks, were to defend the chancery-house. Baron Fief, at the head of the officers of the kitchen, was at another post. The grooms of the stables and the cooks had another place to guard. He rode from his fortifications to his house, promising rewards to every body, creating officers, and declaring, that he would make the lowest of his servants captains, if they behaved with courage in the engagement.

It was not long before they saw the Turks and Tartars, advancing in order of battle to attack the little fortress, with ten pieces of ordnance and two mortar-pieces. The horse-tails waved in the air, the clarions sounded, the cries of Alla, Alla, were heard on all sides. Baron Grothufen took notice that the Turks did not mix any abusive lan-

guage

guage against the king in their cries, but only called him *Demir-Bash*, which signifies head of iron, and resolved that moment to go alone and unarmed out of the fortifications. He advanced up to the line of the Janisaries, who had almost all of them received money from him. "Ah, what my friends! says he to them in their own language, are you come to massacre 300 defenceless Swedes? You brave Janisaries, who have pardoned a hundred thousand Moscovites upon their crying *Amman*, (i. e. Pardon) to you: have you forgot the kindness you have received from us? And would you assassinate that great king of Sweden, whom you loved so much, and who has been so generous to you? My friends, he asks but three days, and the Sultan's orders are not so strict as you are made to believe."

These words produced an effect which Grothusen himself did not expect. The Janisaries swore upon their beards, they would not attack the king, and that they would give him the three days he demanded. In vain was the signal given for the assault. The Janisaries far from obeying, threatened to fall upon their leaders, if three days were not granted to the king of Sweden. They came to the *Basha* of Bender's tent in a body, crying out that the Sultan's orders were forged. To this unexpected insurrection the *Basha* had nothing to oppose but patience.

He

He made as if he was pleased with the generous resolution of the Janisaries, and ordered them to retreat to Bender. The Kam of Tartary, who was a hot forward man, would have given the assault immediately with his troops; but the Bascha, who did not design the Tartars alone should have the honour of taking the king, when he perhaps might be punished for the disobedience of his Janisaries, persuaded the Kam to wait till the next day. The Bascha returning to Bender, assembled all the officers of the Janisaries and the oldest soldiers, and both read to them, and shewed them, the positive order of the Sultan, and the Musti's Fetfa.

Sixty of the oldest of them, with venerable grey beards, who had received a thousand presents from the king's hand, offered to go in person to him, and intreat him to put himself into their hands, and permit them to serve him as guards. The bascha consented to it; for there was no expedient he would not try, rather than be forced to kill the king. Accordingly these sixty old soldiers went the next morning to Varnick, having nothing in their hands but long white staves, the only arms of the Janisaries, when they are not going to fight. They addressed themselves to baron Grothusen and chancellor Mullern: they told them, they were come with a design to serve as faithful guards to the king; and that if he pleased, they would

would conduct him to Adrianople, where he might speak to the grand signor in person. While they were making this proposal, the king read the letters that were brought from Constantinople. These letters were written by count Poniatosky. He told the king, that the sultan's orders to seize or massacre his royal person, in case of resistance, were but too true; but neither the proposal of the old Janisaries, nor Poniatosky's letters, could in the least convince the king that it was possible for him to give way without injuring his honour. He chose rather to die by the hand of the Turks, than be in any manner their prisoner. He dismissed the Janisaries without seeing them, and sent them word, that if they did not go about their business, he'd shave their beards for them; which, in the east, is reckoned the most provoking affront that can be offered.

These old soldiers, fired with resentment, returned home crying, as they went: Ah this head of iron! Since he is resolved to perish, let him perish. They gave the basha an account of their commission, and acquainted their comrades at Bender, with the strange reception they had met with. Upon this, every one swore to obey the basha's orders without delay; and they were now as impatient of going to the assault as they had been averse to it the day before. The word was given that moment. They marched

up to the intrenchments. The Tartars were already waiting for them, and the cannon began to play. The janisaries on one side, and the Tartars on the other, forced this little camp in an instant. Twenty Swedes had scarce time to draw their swords, before the whole three hundred were surrounded and taken prisoners without resistance. The king was then on horseback between the house and his camp, with the generals Hord, Nardoff and Sparre; and seeing that all his soldiers had suffered themselves to be taken before his eyes, he said in cool blood, to those three officers, let us go and defend the house. We'll fight, adds he, with a smile, *pro aris & focis*.

Immediately he gallops up to the house with them, where he had placed about forty domesticks as centinels, and which they had fortified in the best manner they could. But when they came to the door, they found it beset with janisaries. Besides, near two hundred Turks or Tartars had already got in at a window, and made themselves masters of all the apartments, except a great hall, whither the king's domesticks had retired. It happened luckily that this hall was near the door, at which the king purposed to enter with his little troop of twenty persons. He threw himself off his horse with pistol and sword in hand, and his followers did the same.

The

The janisaries fell upon him on all sides, being encouraged by the basha's promise of eight ducates of gold to each man that should but touch his cloaths, in case they could take him. He wounded and killed all who came near him. A janisary, whom he had wounded, clapped his blunderbuss to his face, and if the arm of a Turk had not jostled him, occasioned by the croud, that moved backwards and forwards like waves, the king had been killed. The ball grazed upon his nose, and took of a piece of his ear, and then broke general Hord's arm. The king stuck his sword into the janisary's breast, and at the same time his domesticks, who were shut up in the great hall, opened the door to him. He enters as swift as an arrow with his little troop, and in an instant they shut the door again, and barricade it with all they can find.

Charles XII. was now shut up in this hall with all his attendants, amounting to about three score men, officers, guards, secretaries, valet de chambre's, and domesticks of all kinds.

The janisaries and Tartars, pillaged the rest of the house, and filled the apartments. "Come," says the king, "let us go and drive out these barbarians." And putting himself at the head of his men, he, with his own hands, opened the door of the hall which faced his bed-chamber, goes into it

and fires upon the plunderers. The Turks, loaded with booty, being terrified at the sudden appearance of the king, whom they had been used to reverence, threw down their arms, and leapt out of the window, or fled into the cellars. The king taking advantage of the confusion they were in, and his own men animated with this piece of success, they pursued the Turks from chamber to chamber, killed or wounded those who had not made their escape, and in a quarter of an hour cleared the house of the enemy.

The Swedes at length become masters of the house, shut the windows again, and barricadoed them. In this situation they had no want of arms, a ground-chamber full of muskets and powder, having escaped the tumultuous search of the janisaries. These they made a very seasonable use of, firing close upon the Turks through the windows, and killing two hundred of them in less than half a quarter of an hour.

The cannon played against the house; but the stones being very soft, it only made holes in the wall, but demolished nothing.

The kam of Tartary and the basha, ordered some arrows, twisted about with lighted matches to be shot upon the roof, and against the doors and windows; by which means the house was immediately in a flame. The roof all on fire was ready to tumble upon the Swedes. The king, with a very sedate air, gave

gave orders to extinguish the fire ; and finding a little barrel full of liquor, he laid hold of it himself, and with the assistance of two Swedes, threw it upon the place where the the fire was most violent : then he discovered it was full of brandy. But the hurry hindered him from thinking of it before. Upon this it burnt more furiously than ever : the king's apartment was consumed, and the great hall, where the Swedes then were, was filled with a terrible smoke, mixed with gusts of fire, that came in thro' the doors of the neighbouring apartments. One half of the roof fell in, and the other tumbled down without the house, cracking among the flames.

A centinel named Rosen, had the thought to say, that the chancery-house, which was but fifty paces off, had a stone roof, and was proof against fire ; that it would do well to fall out and gain that house, and there stand upon their defence. "A true Swede," cries the king : then he embraced him, and made him a colonel upon the spot. "Come on, my friends, says he, take all the powder and ball you can carry, and let us gain the chancery sword in hand.

The Turks were much surpris'd, when they saw them open the doors, and the king and the men fall upon them in a desperate manner. Charles, and his principal officers were armed with sword and pistol. Every

one fired two pistols at a time in the instant that the door opened; and in the twinkling of an eye throwing away their pistols, and drawing their swords, they drove the Turks back the distance of fifty paces; but the moment after this little troop was surrounded. The king, being booted according to custom, threw himself down with his spurs. Immediately one and twenty janisaries fall upon him, disarmed him, and bear him away to the basha's quarters, some taking hold of his arms, and others of his legs †. As soon as the king saw himself in their hands, the violence of his temper, and the fury which so long and desperate a fight would naturally inspire, gave place to a gentle and calm behaviour. Not one impatient word fell from him; not a frown was to be seen. As the janisaries carried him along, crying Alla, with a mixture of anger and respect in their countenances, the king looked at them with a smiling aspect. His officers also were taken, and striped, and all his men who were not killed were taken prisoners. The king was conducted to Bender, on a fine horse with rich furniture, followed by his officers naked, and chained two and two, guarded by Tartars and janisaries, on horseback; some

† This extraordinary adventure happened on the 12th of February 1713.

strangers,

strangers who were there, assisted by the basha of Bender, redeemed all the king's officers, were the next morning removed with king Charles, to Adrianople, under the care of the basha of Bender ||. At last, king Charles found means to convey his accusations against the visir to the ear of the sultan. Soon after, a sudden change happened in the seraglio; the musti was deposed, the kam of the Tartars banished to Rhodes, and the serasquier basha of Bender, was sent to an island in the archipelago; but whether these changes were in consequence of the king's remonstrances, is uncertain; however, the Swedes affirm it was so. In the mean time, king Charles was carried to a little castle called Demirtash, near Adrianople, and some days after, permitted to retire to the little town of Demotica †, to reside there as long as he pleased. The king, that he might a-

|| At the same time that Charles was removing to Adrianople, king Stanislaus, who had been siezed in the Turk's dominions, was carried prisoner to Bender. It seems he was coming in disguise to king Charles, to ask his leave to resign the crown of Poland, which he was no longer able to keep from Augustus.

† Situated six leagues from Adrianople, near the famous river of Hebrus, now known by the name of Marizza.

void any insults from the Turks, did not choose to appear out of doors; he therefore counterfeited illness, and kept his bed for ten months. During this voluntary confinement, he received the disagreeable news of the dissolution of all his foreign dominions, yet the king still resolved to stay at Demotica, resting on the vain expectation of assistance from the Turks. Having been confined here eleven months, he at last became sick in reality. At last receiving letters from his sister, that the régency of Sweden were disposed to make her conclude a peace with the czar and Denmark; the king signified to the grand visir his desire to return home by the way of Germany. His majesty began his journey on the first of October*. A Capigi basha, with six chiaouxes, went to attend him from the castle of Demirtash, with presents from the grand signor.

The convoy consisted of three-score carriages, loaden with all sorts of provision, and three hundred horse.

When the king of Sweden came to the German frontiers, he found the emperor had given order for his reception every where with proper state. Wherever harbingers had fixed his route, great preparations were making to entertain him; and a world of peo-

ple came to behold the man, whose conquests and misfortunes, whose least actions, and even his repose had made so much noise both in Europe and Asia. Dismissing his Turkish attendants at Targowitz, on the borders of Transylvania; he called his people together in a yard, and bid them take no thought for him, but make the best of their way to Straelsund in Pomerania, about three hundred leagues from thence, up the Baltick sea §.

In all the way, he kept clear as much as he possibly could, of any place that belonged to his open or concealed enemies; and so by the way of Hungary, Moravia, Austria, Bavaria, Wirtemberg, and Palatinate, Westphalia and Mecklenburg, he made almost the tour of Germany, which was farther by half than he need have gone. Having rid all the first day without stopping, in sixteen days riding, and often in danger of being taken, he came at last upon the 21st of November

§ He took no body with him, but one During, a young man, whom he made a colonel afterwards. He parted chearfully with his officers, leaving them in great confusion and concern for him. For a disguise he wore a black peruke, under which he tacked his own hair, a gold laced hat, grey cloaths, and a blue cloak, passing for a German officer, and rid post with only colonel During.

1714, to the gates of Straelsund, about one in the morning.

The news of his arrival was all over the town in an instant. Every body got up; the soldiers came about the governor's house. The streets were full of people, asking if the news were true? The windows were illuminated, and conduits ran with wine, and the artillery fired. However, the king was put to bed, which was more than he had been for sixteen days: they were forced to cut off his boots, his legs were so swollen with the fatigue. He had neither linnen nor clothes; and they provided in haste whatever they could find to fit him. When he had slept some hours, the first thing he did was to review his troops, and examine the fortifications. And that very day he sent out orders into all parts for renewing the war with more vigour than ever among all his enemies.

Europe was now in a condition very different from what it was when king Charles left it. Augustus had been long restored to the crown of Poland by the assistance of the czar, and with consent of the emperor: but Sweden had lost all her foreign provinces, and had neither trade nor money, nor credit; her veteran troops who were once so formidable, were either killed or died for want. Above one hundred thousand Swedes were slaves in the vast dominions of Moscovy; and almost

almost as many more were sold to the Turks and Tartars. The very species of men was visibly decayed in the country ; but, notwithstanding all this, their hopes revived as soon as ever they heard their king was come to Straelsund ; and multitudes of young people came out of all parts of the country, and offered themselves to be enlisted.

Misfortunes now came on as fast as once his victories had done. In June 1715 the king of England's German forces, with those of Denmark, invested the strong town of Wismar. The Danes, the Prussians, and the Saxons, to the number of thirty-six thousand, marched in a body to Straelsund, in order to form the siege. Not far from Straelsund five Swedish ships were sunk by the Danes and Prussians. The czar kept the Baltick with twenty large men of war, and one hundred and fifty transports, that had thirty thousand men on board. He threatened a descent on Sweden, appearing on the coasts of Helsingbourg and Stockholm by turns. All Sweden was in arms upon the coasts expecting an invasion. His land forces were chasing the Swedes from all the places they possessed in Finland towards the gulph of Bothnia. But he attempted nothing farther.

At this time Charles sustained the loss of Usedom, and the neighbouring islands, which were quickly taken, while Wismar was ready to surrender, and Sweden had no longer any

fleet, but was reduced to the utmost danger, he himself was in Straelsund, besieged by thirty-six thousand men.

Straelsund is one of the strongest places in Pomerania. It is built between the Baltick and the lake of Franken, near the streights of Gella. There is no way to it at land but by a narrow causeway, defended by a citadel, and fortifications that were once thought inaccessible. There was in it a garrison of nine thousand men, and more than all, the king of Sweden himself. The kings of Denmark and Prussia besieged it, with an army of thirty-six thousand men, consisting of Prussians, Danes, and Saxons. The trenches were opened in the night between the 19th and 20th of October, 1715. The besiegers carried on their work with great vigour; in which they were strangely assisted by an uncommon accident. The Baltick has no flux and reflux, and the retrenchment that covered the town was thought impracticable, having an unpassable marsh upon the west, and the sea to the east. Never any one had observed before, that, in a strong westerly wind, the waves of the Baltick do roll back in such a manner as to leave but three feet water under the retrenchment, and they always took it to be here considerably deep. Mr. de Koppen, a colonel in the Prussian service, had studied at Straelsund, and as he frequently bathed himself in the sea, he found that the

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fortification terminated in a place where the water was not above four feet deep. He communicated this discovery to the king-his master, and desired to be ordered out to possess himself of that fortification, and his request was granted.

The next night, the wind being still at west, lieutenant-colonel Koppen went into the water, with one thousand eight hundred men, two thousand advanced at the same time upon the causeway that led to the intrenchments: all the Prussian artillery fired; and the Prussians and Danes gave an alarm on the other side.

Koppen with his eighteen hundred men entered the fortification from the sea, and so that they could make no head; and the post was carried, after a prodigious slaughter. Some of the Swedes retired into the town, but the besiegers followed them, and some got in with those that fled. Two officers, and four of the Saxon soldiers, were got upon the draw-bridge; but the Swedes had just time enough to raise it, and took the men; and so, for that time, the town was saved.

They found twenty-four pieces of cannon upon the retrenchments, which they turned against the town. The siege, after this success, was carried on with all possible eagerness, and the town was cannonaded and bombarded without remission.

The enemy had been, for three months, making all proper dispositions for a descent
on

on the island of Rugen, over-against Straelsund, which was very difficult: but having built boats for the purpose, the prince of Anhalt, by the favour of good weather, landed at last twelve thousand men upon the place ||.

That very day the king had been defending an outwork for three hours, and coming back very much fatigued, he was told that the Danes and Prussians were in Rugen. It was eight o'clock at night, and he went directly, in a fisher-boat, with Poniatosky, Grothusen, During, and Dardorf, and by nine he got to the island. He joined his two thousand men, who were entrenched near a little haven, about three leagues from where the enemy had landed. He marched with them at midnight in great silence. The prince of Anhalt had already intrenched his troops, with a caution that seemed unnecessary; his officers expected nothing in the night, and thought Charles was at Straelsund. But the prince, who knew what Charles was capable of attempting, ordered a deep fosse to be sunk, with a chevaux de frize upon the edge of it, and took as much precaution as if he had to do with an army of superior force.

At two in the morning Charles came to the enemy's camp, without making the least

November 15.

noise.

noise. His soldiers said to one another, Let us pull up the cheveau de frise : which words were overheard by the centinels ; and the alarm being quickly given, the enemies stood to their arms. The king taking up the cheveaux de frise, sees a great fosse. Ay, says he, is it possible ! this is more than I expected ! Not at all discouraged, and knowing nothing of their numbers, nor they of his, for the night favoured him in that, he resolved in an instant, jumped into the ditch, and some of the boldest with him, and all the rest were quickly after him. The chevaux de frise that were removed, the levelled earth, trunks and branches of trees as they could be found, and the bodies of the dead who fell by random shot, served for fascines. The king, the generals, and the boldest of the officers and soldiers, mounted upon the shoulders of others, as in assaults. The fight began in the enemies camp, and the vigour of the Swedes put the Danes and Prussians into great disorder ; but their numbers being too unequal, the Swedes were repulsed in about a quarter of an hour, and repassed the fosse. The prince of Anhalt pursued them to the plain, little thinking it was Charles who fled before him. The unfortunate king rallied his troops in the field, and the fight was renewed with equal warmth on both sides. He saw his favourite Grothusen, and general Dardorf, fall, and passed over the last in fighting,

fighting, before he was quite dead. During, his companion from Turkey to Straelsund, was killed before his face.

In the heat of the battle a Danish lieutenant knew the king of Sweden, and clapping one hand on his sword, and with the other seizing him by the hair, Yield yourself a prisoner, sir, said he, or I will kill you upon the spot. Charles drew a pistol from his belt, and, with his left hand, fired it at the officer; who died of the shot the next morning. The name of king Charles, which the Dane had pronounced, drew a croud of enemies together in a moment, the king was immediately surrounded, and received a musket shot below his left breast. The wound, which he only called a contusion, was two fingers deep. The king was then on foot, and in the utmost danger of being either made a prisoner, or slain. Count Poniatosky, at this critical instant, fought near his majesty's person. He had the good fortune to preserve him, and to remount him very seasonably.

The Swedes retired to a part of the island called Alteserra, where there was a fort they were yet masters of. From thence the king returned to Straelsund, obliged to leave those brave troops, who had served him so well in that expedition: and they were all made prisoners of war two days after.

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The king continuing to be shut up in Straelsund, and ready to be taken, was yet the same as he had been before at Bender; he was surpris'd at nothing. All the day he was making ditches and entrenchments behind the walls; and at night he sallied out upon the enemy. The town, however, was shattered miserably, the bombs fell thick upon the houses, and half the town reduced to ashes. The inhabitants, far from repining, followed him to the sallies, and were now become as good as another garrison ||.

In four days the enemy made an assault upon the horn-work, which they took twice, and were as often beat off. The king was always fighting among the granadiers: but at

|| One day, as the king was dictating to a secretary some dispatches for Sweden, a bomb falling on the house, came through the roof, and burst very near his room. Part of the floor fell down; but the closet where the king was being worked into a thick wall, was not shattered, and, by a wonderful good fortune, none of the splinters came in at the door, though it was open. In this noise and confusion the secretary dropped his pen, and thought the house was coming down. "What ails you," says the king, very calmly, "why don't you write? The man could only bring out, The bomb, sir!" "Well," says the king, "and what has that to do with our business? go on."

last

last their number prevailing, they became masters of it. Charles continued in the place two days after that. The one and twentieth, he staid till midnight upon a little ravelin that was quite destroyed by the bombs and cannon. The next day the chief officers entreated him to stay no longer in a place which could not be defended. But to retreat was now as dangerous as to stay. The Baltick was covered with Moscovite and Danish ships. In the port of Straelsund there was a small bark with sails and oars. The extreme danger which made such a retreat glorious, induced Charles to consent to it, and he embarked the 20th of December 1715, at night, with only ten persons. Through numerous dangers the king came up with two of his ships that were cruising in the Baltick, and the next day Strealsund was surrendered, the garrison were made prisoners of war, and the king landed at Isted in Scania, and came to CarelsCroon.

At CarelsCroon, where he staid the winter, he ordered new levies every where. Commissions were given to privateers, who having great privileges, to the ruin of the country, provided him some ships. It was an extreme surprise to all Europe, who were attentive to the fortune of Charles, when, instead of his country which was threatened with invasions by so many princes, he marched into Norway in the month of March with
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twenty thousand men. Charles advanced towards Christiania, and fortune began again to smile on him in this part of the world: but he never took a proper care to subsist his troops, while an army and fleet of Danes were coming to defend Norway. Charles, for want of provisions, was forced to retire to Sweden.

Charles was going to make a second attempt upon Norway, in October 1718, and he had laid matters so, that he did not doubt to be master of that kingdom in six months. He rather chose to go and conquer rocks, amidst snow and ice, in the severity of the winter which kills the very animals even in Sweden, where the air is less rigorous, than regain his beautiful provinces in Germany; he hoped his new alliance with the czar would soon put him in a condition to retake them. At the mouth of the river Tistendall, near the bay of Denmark, between the towns of Bahus and Anflo, stands Fredericshall, a place of great strength and importance, which is reckoned to be the key of that kingdom. Charles sat down before it in the month of December. The cold was so extreme; that the soldiers could hardly break the ground. They might as well have opened trenches in a rock; but the Swedes never thought much of any fatigues in which they saw their king take his share so readily; and Charles himself never suffered more than now.

with

With such a body of iron, and a soul of so much strength and courage, in every condition, there was not one of all his neighbours who did not fear him.

On the 11th of December, he went about nine at night to see the trenches; and finding the parallel not advanced to his mind, he was a little displeased; but Mons. Megret, a French engineer, who conducted the siege, assured him, the place would be taken in eight days time. "We shall see," says the king, and going on with the engineer to examine the works, he stopped at a place where the Boyau made an angle with the parallel, and kneeling upon the inner Talus, he leaned with his elbows on the parapet, to look upon the men who were carrying on the trenches by starlight.

The king stood with half his body exposed to a battery of cannon exactly levelled at the angle where he was. Two Frenchmen were all who were then near his person, one was monsieur Siker his aid-de-camp, a man of great courage and conduct, who came into his service in Turkey; and was particularly attached to the prince of Hesse; the other was this engineer. The cannon fired upon them with chain-shot, to which the king stood most exposed. Not far behind was count Swerin, who commanded the trenches. Count Posse, captain of the guards, and one Kulbert, an aid-de-camp received his orders

orders. Siker and Megret saw the king fall upon the parapet, fetching a deep sigh. They ran to him, but he was already dead. A ball of half a pound had struck him on the right temple, and made a whole big enough to turn their fingers in. His head lying over the parapet, the left eye was beat in, and the right was forced quite out of its socket. He was dead the moment he received this; but he had the force in that instant to put his hand by a natural motion to the guard of his sword, and lay in that posture. They covered the corps with a grey cloak; Siker put him on his hat and wig, and he was carried by the name of captain Carlssbern through the troops, who saw their dead king pass, little thinking who it was.

Thus fell Charles XII. king of Sweden, at the age of six and thirty years and a half, whose courage growing into rashness, was the occasion of his death; leaving a lesson to kings; who from him may learn, that a peaceful and happy government is more eligible, than such dear bought glory.

End of VOLUME the TENTH.



